Leading School Turnaround: The Lived Experience of Being a Transformation Coach

Dissertation

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By

Denise Arla Snowden, M.Ed.
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Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Belinda Gimbert, Advisor
Dr. Helen Marks
Dr. Anika Anthony
Abstract

This phenomenological case study explored the experiences of 5 transformation coaches who led the implementation of a federal school improvement grant at four urban high schools in a public school district in the southern United States. The knowledge generated from this inquiry provided new insight into the role of the transformation coach. The research question driving this study was: What is the lived experience of the transformation coach during the first year of implementation of the transformation intervention model? Naturalistic inquiry was used to collect qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and document analysis including researcher field notes and learning community agendas. The data were explicated using open codes and memoing, then categorically coded leading to the identification of 5 themes represented as tensions: formal vs. informal authority; ambiguity vs. clarity of expectations; closed vs. open relationships; vision vs. reality; and turnaround vs. instructional leadership.

The interpretation of these themes revealed 5 assertions that captured the experiences of the transformation coaches: (1) Holding a position of formal authority yet protected from conducting teacher evaluations is necessary for transformation coaches to provide receptive support and feedback to teachers; (2) Clear expectations and ongoing professional learning experiences are necessary for the preparation, support and alignment of transformation coaches; (3) Establishing strong, open, trusting relationships with teachers and students is essential for transformation coaches to overcome resistance to change and move the turnaround initiative forward; (4) A high degree of
administrative and managerial skills including prioritization, documentation, and multi-tasking are required of transformation coaches to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the school improvement grant; and (5) Instructional and turnaround leadership responsibilities are shared by transformation coaches and school principals.

Actionable recommendations are presented to education professionals including school principals, local education agencies (district human resource personnel and district school turnaround personnel), policy makers, university personnel and researchers. Investing in the preparation and ongoing support of transformation coaches as well as establishing a partnership relationship between transformation coaches and school principals were critical recommendations emerging from this research. School turnaround leadership preparation needs to be addressed on a broader scale including the establishment of turnaround leadership preparation programs, job-embedded support for leaders of school turnaround, and partnerships between K-12 organizations and universities.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to

my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who provided me with the opportunity to serve Him

through my experiences on this nine-year quest;

my husband and son, Gregory Snowden and Nathan Shelton who willingly took on the

roles of encourager and cheerleader; and

my mentor, the late Anna Marie Farnish who saw something special in me and took me

under her wing so that I could fly.
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A season of my life is coming to a close. It’s been nine years since I packed up and moved to Columbus, Ohio to start this adventure. The sacrifices others have made so that I could accomplish this achievement overwhelm me with gratitude and humility. No one has sacrificed more than my beloved son, Nathan Bradley Shelton. He was entering the seventh grade when I started on this journey and sacrificed his home and friendships to move two hours away and start a new life as his mom went back to school. He is now finishing his junior year of college – so much time has passed and what a wonderful young man he has become. I cannot express in words the depth of my love for him and my admiration of his resilience, tenacity and loyalty. He has been God’s reminder of His presence in my life.

Gregory Snowden, my husband, married a doctoral student and accepted the roller coaster of my life with openness and grace. He has been unabashedly supportive and unconditionally present. He never doubted my ability or my intelligence even when I felt like giving up. I’m not sure what marriage will be like now that this season of my life is closing, but I hope it includes more quality time together.

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The transformation coaches, who shared their personal and professional lives with me, I am honored by your trust in me, amazed at your depth of commitment to educating all children, and impressed by your authentic reflection and desire to learn. You inspire me in many ways and I thank you for letting me into your world.

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ministry was unavoidable. Thank you for your sacrifices, protecting me from myself and providing me with the gift of time to finish my dissertation.
Vita

1970.................................................................Born, Cleveland, Ohio
1995.................................................................B.S. in Education, Ashland University
1995.................................................................Middle School Teacher, Firelands Schools
1999.................................................................M.Ed. in Curriculum, Ashland University
2001.................................................................Director of Teaching and Learning, The Center for Leadership in Education, Elyria, Ohio
2003.................................................................Program Officer, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Columbus, Ohio
2004 to present ................................................Education Consultant, Self-Employed

Fields of Study

Major Field:  Education
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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem

This study examines the phenomenon of the lived experience of the transformation coach during the first year of implementation of the transformation intervention model of school turnaround. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of five transformation coaches at persistently low-achieving secondary schools in an urban public school district in the southern United States. The knowledge generated from this inquiry provides new insight into the role of the transformation coach and informs school reform policy and practice. I employ qualitative phenomenological case study methodology to illuminate the phenomenon under examination. Participants of this study include a purposefully selected sample consisting of five transformation coaches at persistently low-achieving secondary schools in the same urban district during the 2010-2011 school-year.

This chapter begins with an overview of the context and background that frames the study. The problem statement, statement of purpose, and research questions follow. Additionally included in this chapter are an overview of the research approach and the perspective of the researcher. At the conclusion of this chapter are the proposed significance of this study and the definitions of key terminology.
Background of the Study

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education outlined four recommended paths or intervention models to turn around a school that was considered persistently low-achieving (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010). These intervention model options for school turnaround were: transformation, turnaround, restart, or closure. Funds provided through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, Title I, Part A, Section 1003(g) were allocated to support the implementation of these intervention models. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided three billion dollars in extra funding for this program of school improvement grants (SIGs). Local education agencies (LEAs) or school districts that were determined by their state education agency (SEA) to fit the definition of “persistently low-achieving” were provided the opportunity to compete for subgrants to implement one of these intervention models. Schools across the country were implementing these four models in order to raise substantially the achievement of students as measured by the attainment of adequate yearly progress (AYP) and upgraded exit improvement status. Nearly 1.4 billion dollars was awarded to SEAs as part of their fiscal year 2010 SIG competitions (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This grant was renewable for up to three years.

The transformation intervention model for school turnaround was the most widely selected intervention of the four models presented by the U.S. Department of Education. More than 70 percent of schools participating in the federal SIG program were using the transformation model (Jambulapati, 2011). One of the reasons for the transformation
model’s popularity may have been that it was viewed as the least restrictive model and it did not require removing teachers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010). The requirements outlined in the U.S. Department of Education’s (2010) ESEA Blueprint for Reform for the transformation model included replacing the principal, strengthening the staff, implementing a research-based instructional program, providing extended learning time, and implementing new governance and flexibility (p. 12).

The Oakfield Public Schools (pseudonym), an urban school district in the southern United States received a SIG to address the needs of four high schools serving grades 9-12. Each of these schools qualified for funding as a Tier I school. A Tier I school was defined as any Title I school that was in: (a) improvement - failed to make annual yearly progress for two or three consecutive years, (b) corrective action - failed to make annual yearly progress for four consecutive years, or (c) restructuring - failed to make annual yearly progress for five years. These schools are considered “persistently lowest-achieving” as defined in section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Tier II schools are secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive Title I-Part A funding and are identified by the SEA as “persistently lowest-achieving” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Tier I schools are identified as highest priority for assistance through the SIG. Schools receiving a federal SIG were required to select an intervention model to guide their school turnaround efforts. All four SIG high schools in the Oakfield Public Schools selected the transformation model of intervention to implement.
As part of the LEA’s SIG proposal for each of these four sites was the creation of a new full-time, job-embedded, school-based position – a transformation coach. The minimum qualifications of this role were a master’s degree, an administrative credential, and five years of successful teaching or administrative experience preferably in a large urban school district. The transformation coach’s role was not clearly understood, but at the district level, as described in the transformation coach’s job description (see Appendix A), the coach was charged with overseeing the complete and effective implementation of all elements of the school’s SIG. The transformation coach reports to the principal and district turnaround director and works closely with the district turnaround office and lead turnaround partner. Although a general sense of the role’s requirements and the hierarchy was known, the position of transformation coach was new and unclear. Although the duties and responsibilities of this position were outlined prior to fully understanding the work required by this turnaround initiative, the responsibilities of the transformation coach’s job description can be grouped into these general categories: grant management, turnaround leadership and instructional leadership.

No research was available on this form of coaching, technical assistance or support within the framework of the transformation intervention model. Therefore, the realities that drive and restrain the effectiveness of this type of coach need to be uncovered through the study of these coaches’ lived experience. This study sought to shed light on the role of the transformation coach within the implementation of the transformation intervention model for school turnaround.
Statement of the Problem

The U.S. Department of Education (2010) asserts that persistently low-performing schools can improve results for students through the adoption and implementation of one of four intervention models for school turnaround (turnaround, transformation, restart, school closure). An urban school district in the southern United States created a position in each school implementing a SIG called a transformation coach to lead the implementation of the transformation intervention model of school turnaround. The role of the transformation coach is new and not clearly defined.

Research abounds on curricular and instructional coaches but little research exists on transformation coaches. According to the job description of the transformation coach, instructional, leadership, relational and change management skills are prerequisites (see Appendix A). This combination of skills has not been explored for in-depth understanding. For example, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2004) found that instructional coaching is an effective form of embedded professional learning and encourages collaborative and reflective practice, promotes positive cultural change, encourages the use of data to inform practice, promotes implementation and accountability and supports leadership. Instructional coaching appears to be one dimension of transformation coaching, but there may be a different mix of skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary to be an effective transformation coach. Russo (2004) asserts that “better school-based coaching research is needed” (p. 4) and continues by adding that the professional development strategy of coaching may have a great deal of “untapped potential” (p. 4). Examining with intent this new approach to coaching will
greatly inform the field of educational policy and leadership, especially schools considering the adoption of one of the federally defined intervention models for school turnaround.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experience of five transformation coaches at persistently low-achieving secondary schools during the first year of implementation of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) transformation intervention model. It is anticipated that, through the better understanding of the realities experienced by transformation coaches, the issues and challenges they face, and their perceptions of their roles, more informed decisions can be made by policy makers, SIG recipients, and prospective coaches.

**Research Question**

What is the lived experience of the transformation coach during the first year of implementation of the transformation intervention model?

- How do transformation coaches experience their role?
- What are the underlying themes revealed by the transformation coaches’ lived experience?

**Research Approach**

With the approval of the University’s Human Subject’s Review Board, I studied the experience and perceptions of five transformation coaches. Four of the participants were hired into the position of transformation coach during the summer of 2010 for each
of the four high schools participating in the SIG program. One additional participant was incorporated into the study after assuming the role of transformation coach late in the school-year as a replacement to one of the original four coaches. This phenomenological study employed qualitative research methods. This design allowed for a focus on the individual as well as common experiences within this phenomenon that leads to a description of the universal essence. Descriptions of ‘what’ the participants experience and ‘how’ they experience it are outcomes of this design (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 57-58).

In-depth interviews over the course of the school-year were the primary source of data collection. Three transformation coaches were interviewed three times. One transformation coach was interviewed twice before requesting an extended leave of absence from employment. The coach who assumed the role of the transformation coach who took the leave of absence was also interviewed twice. The information obtained through the interviews informed the subsequent interviews. Interviewees were asked to verify their responses from prior interviews in an effort to employ member checking. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were identified by a pseudonym.

Secondary sources of data collection were field notes, and document analysis of SIG coaches’ learning community sessions. Explication using a phenomenological approach was implemented to honor the descriptive nature of the lived experience and the intent of phenomenological research. This research was entered into without an explicit theory to provide an opportunity for the qualitative methods to authentically uncover the dimensions of the transformation coaches’ experience.
The Researcher

At the time of this study, I was employed as a consultant with an external organization providing technical assistance to the school district being studied. The results of this study have no bearing or influence on my employability. Prolonged engagement occurred as a result of my role as facilitator in onsite learning experiences. A collegial relationship was initiated two months prior to the start of data collection to assure familiarity and mutual respect between me and the participants. Persistent observation occurred through the opportunities each month as I shadowed the participants, facilitated each participant’s site-based team meetings and participated in the coaches’ professional learning community.

I acknowledge that the experiences that provided insight due to my position could also serve as a liability in terms of bias and interpretation of findings. To neutralize the tendency toward bias I committed to ongoing self-reflection through bracketing and employed member checking to validate participant responses and emerging themes.

I bring to this experience more than ten years of practical application in the field of school change with notable experience in high school reform. Critical insight into the delicate characteristics of school reform and an in-depth understanding of the relational conditions necessary for school change heighten the sensitivity and importance of this work for me.

Significance of the Study

The potential benefits of this research to the participants are the repeated opportunities to reflect on the essence of their experience forcing a greater depth of
understanding and wondering, and the opportunity to work with colleagues across the
district to examine their practice in the midst of their practice. The potential benefits of
this research outside the participants include policy redesign for more effective
implementation of the transformation intervention model in future endeavors, and
establishing clarity for educational leaders in terms of expectations, requirements,
development and design of the role of transformation coach.

Definitions of Terminology

Local Education Agency (LEA). The local agency overseeing schools, typically
a district or county (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Professional Learning Community (PLC). A group of professional educators
who learn together to direct efforts toward improved student learning (Hord, 1997).

School Improvement Grant (SIG). A federal grant program outlined in the
ESEA and available to the lowest-performing schools in economically challenged
communities requiring the use of one of four intervention models (turnaround,
transformation, restart, or closure).

State Education Agency (SEA). A state education agency is typically the state
department of education or the department of public instruction (U.S. Department of
Education, 2010).

Transformation Coach. A full-time, job-embedded administrative position,
created by the Oakfield Public Schools, responsible for providing direct support to a
school to ensure the complete and effective implementation of all elements of the 1003g
School Improvement Grant (see Appendix A).
**Transformation Model.** One of four school turnaround intervention models defined by the U.S. Department of Education in which the principal is replaced, the staff is strengthened, research-based instructional programs are implemented, extended learning time is provided, and new governance and flexibility are implemented (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010).

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter one introduced the need for further examination of the experience of the transformation coach and the research questions used to guide the exploration of this study. Chapter two provides an in-depth look at the scholarly literature relative to this study and the existing empirical research that provides insight into facets of transformation coaching. Chapter three examines the qualitative methodology employed and the specific steps taken to conduct this study. Chapter four presents profiles of the research participants. Chapter five presents the research findings, while chapter six discusses the implications of the findings and presents recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter offers an examination of the current emphasis in educational reform known as school turnaround with particular attention paid to the role and demands of turnaround leaders. While numerous studies in the organizational recovery effort known as turnaround have been conducted in the business and non-profit sectors outside of education, very few empirical studies are available within the field of education (Murphy, 2008; Public Impact, 2007). The research on turnaround organizations outside the field of education is generally qualitative and consists primarily of case studies of organizations that have successfully turned around their performance (Public Impact, 2007). The goal of this chapter is twofold. First, it highlights turnaround as a type of school reform effort and cast a spotlight on the gap in scholarly research pertaining to school turnaround and school turnaround leadership. Second, since school reform success is predominantly measured by student achievement outcomes (Fullan, 2001) and teacher quality is strongly linked to gains in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; LoGerfo & Goddard, 2008), improving the process of teaching and learning is another critical element in the examination of any school reform movement. In this chapter, the literature on instructional leadership is interrogated in relation to school turnaround.

This chapter is not intended to present a comprehensive examination of the literature on school turnaround, turnaround leadership or instructional leadership.
Although these constructs are important to this discussion, each has a life of its own. This chapter does intend to uncover what is known about organizational turnaround, to identify the implications of turnaround on the role of school reform leaders, and to spotlight gaps in the literature that need further study.

21st Century School Reform

Schools are charged with the responsibility of preparing students to participate in a democratic society and to be college- and career-ready. This is no small task - especially as students come to school with wide-ranging degrees of preparation. Evans (1996) observes that schools are widely seen as having failed to teach both the basic and the higher-order skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly competitive and complex world. Declining test scores, rising dropout rates and low graduation rates have all been adduced as evidence of schools’ inadequacy. Initiated by the report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), efforts to reform schools have consistently increased in momentum.

In the early 1990s there was an attempt to bring some consistency to these school reform efforts. The comprehensive school reform (CSR) movement, which included templates for school improvement was implemented (Rowan, Correnth, Miller, & Camburn, 2009). Accelerating with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, standards-based reform and accountability systems have mandated school reform and tied federal funding streams to student achievement. Private funding sources have also fueled the school reform movement. These reform mandates impact the daily life of schools, forcing participants to relinquish old habits, in favor of new skills, understandings and practices.
Fullan (2003), one of the leading voices in school reform research and practice over the last several decades, believes that mandating what matters doesn’t work. Instead, he believes that to combat the likelihood of school reform failure within a mandated reform environment, leaders must work to increase the positive perception of the change through the articulation of the benefits of the changes, while simultaneously working to minimize the misperceptions and top-down nature of the change (Fullan, 2003). The influence exerted by the leader must have a clear purpose and defined outcome to succeed in a mandated reform environment.

School reform means deliberately changing people and systems and the organizational culture in which they operate while keeping yesterday’s model operating until the switch that activates the new model can be turned on. This complex and challenging task will surely require levels of educational and administrative leadership heretofore unknown in public education. (Lezotte, 1994, p. 20)

Both Fullan (2003) and Lezotte (1994) stress the critical role leadership plays as schools engage in reform efforts.

**The No Child Left Behind Act.**

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is the preferred name of the seventh reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Under the leadership of President George W. Bush and former Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, NCLB was created. The Constitution of the United States of America does not directly address the issue of education; therefore according to the Tenth Amendment,
public education is under the auspice of each state. Since our country was founded, decisions about education have been in the hands of each state, except when they are tied to federal funds. Since the majority of states accept federal monies to support education, such as Title Funds, the states are obligated to comply with the outlined provisions or mandates of the federal government. NCLB is a spending clause tied to monies released under Title I and Title II. The accountability regulations imposed on states through NCLB are mandatory because the states accept the federal funds that accompany Title I and Title II.

Title I monies are generally used to support schools that serve an economically disadvantaged population such as urban centers and rural areas. Each state legislature compiles a funding formula to guide the release of this funding to districts based on the population of students served by the district. Title II monies are generally used to support teacher education and professional development. Again, the state legislature uses a formula to guide the distribution of these funds to districts. When districts accept these funds, they must comply with the state-imposed provisions or accountability measures. Each state has developed a protocol to monitor the distribution of funds tied to NCLB so that the federally imposed accountability measures can be upheld at the state level through district mandates.

Federal policy has had a significant impact on America’s schools and children since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was enacted in 1965. Yet, despite hundreds of programs and hundreds of billions of dollars invested during the last generation, American students still lag behind many of their fellow foreign students, and
the academic achievement gap in the United States between rich and poor, white and minority students, remains wide (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Due to the lack of improvement in student success rates and enormous investment of money in education, NCLB was purposefully designed with accountability measures.

NCLB requires that each state submit a plan to the federal government, the United States Department of Education (USDE), outlining how the accountability mandates will be implemented at the state level. Each item of NCLB must be addressed, but great flexibility is permitted regarding the implementation process. NCLB is an outcome-based spending clause. Since 2001, NCLB has spawned an upheaval of the current education system. It is the foundation for current and future school reform. While we wait on the pending eighth re-enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), efforts in school reform continue with a focus on persistently low-performing schools. In the next section, the movement to turn around these schools will be examined to better understand the latest direction of 21st Century school reform.

School turnaround.

Turnaround, an emerging concept within the field of education, describes an ambitious effort to change the direction of an organization’s performance. Turnaround can be conceptualized as a condition or situation, a process, or a consequence by academics and practitioners both inside and outside the education sector (Murphy, 2008) even though much of the literature addresses turnaround as a condition or situation. An organization in turnaround (i.e., school turnaround as a condition or situation), concurrently implements multiple radical approaches in an effort to change its
degenerative direction. It is more than an attempt at mid-course correction. Turnaround is a new way of being in which the organization, as a living organism, functions in a markedly different manner from its former state of existence.

This concept has strong roots in the corporate world and is associated with an intolerance for prolonged failure, along with an overwhelming focus on better results through assertive action (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). The emphasis within turnaround is its call for action - a call to be “turned around” in a relatively short amount of time (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008). School turnaround is about rapid and dramatic improvement not just in test scores but also in culture, attitude, and student aspirations. It is marked not by orderly implementation but by initiating multiple changes at once and being willing to step in and change – and change again, as results are continually monitored (Pappano, 2010).

Turnaround stands in contrast to the vast body of literature about change in general, which focuses on continuous, incremental improvement of organizations over a long period of time (Public Impact, 2005). It is different from traditional school improvement in both subtle and distinctive ways. In this age of continuous improvement, all schools are expected to operate in a reflective mode making ongoing changes to improve student results. School turnaround “focuses on the most consistently underperforming schools and involves dramatic, transformative change – change driven by the prospects of being closed if it fails” (Calkins, Guenther, Belfore, & Lash, 2007, p. 17). Continuous improvement is a state that turnaround schools strive to attain.
Continuous improvement is a desired outcome, but achieving this outcome requires more than tweaking the current system.

Schools engaged in the turnaround process have a history of persistent low performance. Turnaround schools need an urgent stimulus to convert a climate of low expectations into one of success (Hallinger, 2003). The enculturation of mediocrity has become so entrenched that incremental approaches to change no longer win victories against this permeating culture of failure. Fairchild and DeMary (2011) consider turnaround a moral imperative because of the discrepancies between the demographic populations of the schools that are chronically low-performing and those that are not.

The USDE has significantly contributed to the adoption of the turnaround approach to school reform through the funding stream under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), providing three billion in additional funds for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act’s (ESEA) Title I, Section 1003(g) school improvement grants (SIG). The lowest performing five percent of schools across the United States are eligible for financial assistance to support the costs associated with dramatic change (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This turnaround effort is a priority for the USDE as evidenced by the establishment of the Office of School Turnaround in December 2011. The Office of School Turnaround was created to be a resource to state and local education agencies for the administration of school improvement grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). “Turning around the ‘bottom five’ percent of schools is the crucible of education reform. They represent our greatest, clearest need – and
therefore a great opportunity to bring about fundamental change” (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 8).

**Intervention models.**

Schools eligible to apply for SIG funding to address systemic issues are required to adopt one of four models for turning around chronically low-performing schools. These models are synonomously referred to throughout the literature and within policy documents as “intervention models,” “improvement models,” and “turnaround models.” These models will be referred to as “intervention models” throughout this dissertation.

The ESEA Blueprint for Reform outlines the characteristics of these four models:

- **Transformation model:** Replace the principal, strengthen staffing, implement a research-based instructional program, provide extended learning time, and implement new governance and flexibility.
- **Turnaround model:** Replace the principal and rehire no more than fifty percent of the school staff, implement a research-based instructional program, provide extended learning time, and implement new governance structure.
- **Restart model:** Convert or close and reopen the school under new management of an effective charter operator, charter management organization, or education management organization.
- **School closure model:** Close the school and enroll students who attended it in other higher-performing schools in the district. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010, p. 12)
SIG grantees are eligible for up to six million dollars per school over three years to implement one of these four models. The Education Sector, a nonprofit, education policy think tank, conducted an analysis of SIG grantees. They found that 73% of the schools chose the transformation model, 21% turnaround, 4% restart, and 2% closure (Jambulapati, 2011). The transformation model is regarded as the least restrictive of the four options. The turnaround model requires a major staffing overhaul which could have been a deterrent to its selection.

**Human resources.**

Although there is no single, agreed-upon criteria for determining that a school has turned around (Duke et al., 2008), the desired outcome for schools engaged in turnaround is to be in a place where practices enacted during the turnaround process have taken hold and positive results demonstrate distinctive and measurable changes in student performance. Once that place has been reached, turnaround has been initially achieved and a state of continued improvement is assumed. Turnaround does not relentlessly persist. Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, Levy and Saunders (2008) see turnaround as a period of low achievement which has come to an end and initial indications of improving achievement are evident. Improvement depends ultimately on whether initial success can be sustained over time.

Achieving results for students through school turnaround is rigorous and challenging work. School turnaround is a process that takes place at an organizational level, but “successful change starts and ends at the individual level” (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 7). The cross-industry and educational literature identifies human capital, particularly
leadership, as the key ingredient to successful organizational turnaround (Duke et al., 2008; Fullan, 2006; Murphy, 2008; Public Impact, 2005). The importance of human resources is evident in the descriptions of the USDE’s four turnaround intervention models in which all models require changes in leadership and various degrees of change in faculty. “In the past, replacement of staff and leaders in failing schools has been called reconstitution” (Public Impact, 2005, p. 5). Turnaround is more than varying degrees of reconstitution, it includes additional deliberate changes to create a learning culture among all stakeholder groups and a relentless focus on student achievement.

More than 70 percent of schools participating in the federal SIG program are using the transformation model (Jambulapati, 2011). One of the reasons for the transformation model’s popularity may be that it is viewed as the lease restrictive model because it does not require removing teachers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010). The requirements outlined in the U.S. Department of Education’s ESEA (2010) Blueprint for Reform for the transformation model include replacing the principal, strengthening the staff, implementing a research-based instructional program, providing extended learning time, and implementing new governance and flexibility. Although the principal is replaced in this model (and all others), transformation requires the least amount of change in overall human resources. The literature indicates that turnarounds may be even more challenging in schools than they are in the private sector (Public Impact, 2005). One of the factors of greatest challenge in educational turnaround is the limited supply of qualified educators.
available for some of the more radical models of turnaround, especially in smaller and geographically isolated school districts (Klein, 2010).

It may appear that replacing classroom teachers would be the greatest challenge in terms of human resources, but the literature is undisputed in the necessity of a leader with a specific set of skills to drive the turnaround movement. In the case of turnaround, the leader’s decisions often will distinguish success from failure (Fairchild & DeMary, 2011). Due to the high-stakes environment in which turnaround efforts are situated, not every principal is capable of turning a school around (Duke, 2004). Later, the importance of the selection of leadership, the role of turnaround leadership, and recommended competencies will be explored more deeply in the literature.

School turnaround research availability.

Turnaround practitioners have minimal guidance from research on school turnaround because few studies currently exist on turnaround in the field of education. Two sources of research have been used to guide the turnaround movement in these early stages: school improvement and organizational turnaround. Leithwood, Harris and Strauss (2010) observe that much of the research about school improvement has focused on schools that require slight increases in performance, not substantial intervention; not enough research has been done that focuses on improving schools in serious difficulty to produce a definitive model of improvement. This gap is drawing researcher attention to the study of the USDE’s four intervention models for school turnaround with an almost competitive undertone.
The consequence of education’s failure to recognize turnarounds as a specialized type of school reform has resulted in turnarounds rarely implemented prior to being written into policy and studied even less. Empirical studies on turning around failing schools are emerging, but the literature is nowhere near the depth available in organizational turnarounds outside the education sector. Many education researchers have provided a comprehensive analysis of the turnaround lessons of other sectors while the research in education catches up (Fairchild & DeMary, 2011; Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Murphy, 2008). Quantitative data is readily available to gauge student progress and performance, but measuring the dimensions of turnaround that contribute to student-based outcomes quantitatively is far more complex. Qualitative data and information that results from on-site visits will offer crucial insight into how turnaround schools are progressing (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011). The emerging studies on school turnaround are mostly qualitative and provide a rich description of the challenges and successes that are being experienced.

**Turnaround stages.**

It is well understood by researchers and practitioners alike that although change takes on various shapes and sizes, there are phases or stages that have been identified to mark progress toward the desired outcome. Efforts to implement change in an organization are more likely to be successful if a leader understands the reasons for resistance, the sequential phases in the change process, and the different strategies of change (Yukl, 2002). Learning from the more successful cases, Kotter (1996) finds that the change process not only goes through a series of phases, but also requires a
considerable length of time. The nuances of these stages vary by change initiative, but a constant pattern seems evident: there is a decrease in performance that spurs the change effort, an implementation phase in which new approaches are implemented, and a period of time in which these changes take root to prevent regression. Two newly emerging theories of turnaround stages will be explored to further understand the demands of turnaround and the implications for the role of leadership. One turnaround theory is based on research in the field of organizational development while the other is based on early studies in school turnaround.

Murphy (2008) conducted a review of organizational recovery research in the private and public sectors to provide insight into leadership for turnaround schools. He identified four stages of organizational turnaround: first, a state of stability; second, factors that push the organization into a turnaround situation begin to occupy center stage (disintegration phase); third, actions in response to decline are brought into play (reintegration/regeneration phase); fourth, is the end game of either recovery or death (Murphy, 2008). Murphy does acknowledge that turnaround strategies are not enacted until stage three of his framework. It is this reintegration/regeneration phase that acts as the starting point for two types of turnaround strategies: “retrenchment actions to address immediate, often life-threatening problems and recovery activities designed to restore the health of the organization” (Murphy, 2008, p. 76). All activities in turnaround efforts should be strategic as they link directly to the desired outcomes. Movement through these stages is promoted as the activities seamlessly move from retrenchment into recovery actions.
Leithwood and Strauss (2009) conducted a study of underperforming schools undergoing a turnaround process as part of the Turnaround Teams Project in Ontario, Canada. They found that the school turnaround process occurs in stages with leadership practices specific to the turnaround context. Using this empirical research, three school turnaround stages were identified: first, declining performance; second, an early turnaround or crisis stabilization; and third, a late turnaround or sustaining and improving performance (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009).

Leithwood and Strauss conducted 73 interviews, eight parent focus groups and eight student focus groups across four elementary and four secondary schools that were deemed successful at the end of a three-year turnaround process. Turnaround success was measured by student performance on achievement tests. Additionally, surveys were sent to the teachers and administrators in 11 elementary schools and three secondary schools. Nine of these schools were considered “turnarounds” while five were considered “improving.” Those considered “improving” started from a place considered below district average, but not from a place of chronic underperformance based on achievement data.

Early school turnaround research indicates that successful leadership took different forms at different stages. For example, leadership at the beginning of the turnaround process tends to be highly focused in one person or a small team of people. As the organization begins to improve, leadership becomes more shared and collaborative (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). Additionally, Leithwood and Strauss (2009) found that stimulating the transition from declining performance to crisis stabilization required a
fairly directive form of leadership, but as the process progressed, the responsibility for implementing change broadened (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). Moving from a focused to a diffuse leadership approach empowered additional change agents to act on the vision.

Leithwood and Strauss project that the focus for leadership to move a school into crisis stabilization is to generate the acceptance of three sets of beliefs among teachers:

- All students are capable of learning when appropriate instruction is provided;
- While students’ family backgrounds have important consequences for their learning, schools are able to more than compensate for the effects of challenging family circumstances; and
- What schools need to do for all students to achieve at improved levels is known, can be learned, and requires everyone in the school to work toward common goals. (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009, p. 29)

During the declining performance stage, direction setting was noticeably absent with teachers left to forge their own direction, developing people was not attended to with quality or intent, organizational structures promoted staff isolation, and the instructional program experienced only routine maintenance to minimize disruptions to the routine of school. Drastic change occurred during crisis stabilization in which direction setting became a prominent leadership function with aligned goal-setting, vision casting clearly communicated as well as the implementation of more inclusive leadership practices. The three sets of beliefs among teachers outlined above demonstrate the increase in buy-in necessary during the crisis stabilization stage. People are developed with intention as rich learning experiences are provided to staff which increased the buy-
in for change and personal commitment within the new culture of learning. The redesigned organization moved from isolation to collaboration with the creation of teams and groups and the building of open communication structures. The goals of the instructional program become the driving force behind school operations, and more student-based diagnostic and formative assessments are used to monitor learning resulting in individualized instruction and adaptation (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

Leithwood and Strauss (2009) acknowledge that due to the timing of their study (3-4 years into the turnaround process), few schools showed indications of the third stage, sustaining and improving performance. It is expected that the most successful leaders during the sustaining phase, when all staff must permanently adopt widespread behavior changes, resemble classic managers and may need to use more incremental change tactics (Public Impact, 2005). In the sustaining phase, fine-tuning occurs and consistent monitoring continues. The leadership strategies to engage and implement drastic change are different from those needed to sustain these changes. Leaders need to be mindful of their leadership strategies in relation to the stages in the turnaround process.

Leithwood and Strauss’ (2009) stages are almost parallel to Murphy’s (2008) last three stages. Murphy’s disintegration is similar to Leithwood et al.’s declining performance; reintegration/regeneration is similar to early turnaround or crisis stabalization; and recovery is similar to late turnaround or sustaining and improving performance. This overlap allows educational researchers to see the validity of examining
research in other fields for possible application to educational contexts, especially with concepts new to education.

The case for the importance of turnaround leadership has been made by both practitioners and researchers inside and outside the field of education. From taking the risk to step into a chronically underperforming organization and make drastic (and many times unpopular) changes to employing strategies to navigate an organization through the turnaround process, the skills a turnaround leader needs to harness are specialized. Knowing the predicted stages of the turnaround process is a good place to begin, but understanding the role of leadership in each of these stages is of clear importance. The role of turnaround leadership will be uncovered further in the next section.

**Turnaround Leadership**

In nearly all studies of organizational success, leadership is seen as a central variable (Yukl, 2002). School turnaround is no different. Research shows that in the other public and private sectors with greater turnaround experience, turnarounds simply do not take place without the right leader at the helm (Herman, et al., 2008). Murphy (2008) identifies three defining themes about leadership for turnaround schools based on an analysis of the literature in the field of organizational recovery. These themes are as follows: “leadership as the critical variable in the turnaround equation; change of leadership as a generally essential element in organizational recovery; and type of leadership, but not style, as important in organizational reintegration work” (Murphy, 2008, p. 80). Aligned to the first two themes identified by Murphy, the USDE’s four intervention models for school turnaround emphasize the importance of leadership and
the necessity to change leadership at the beginning of a turnaround initiative. The last theme, type of leadership, has not been explicitly addressed in educational policy, but the specialized set of leadership skills necessary for turnaround success is drawing more attention from practitioners, state education departments and universities.

If a principal has been engrained in the culture of failure in a declining school, he/she is unlikely to have the skills necessary to lead the same school through a successful turnaround process. Additionally, something must signal the start of the turnaround process, and typically, a change in leadership sends a strong message. The literature suggests that turnarounds require the appointment of chief executives who are outsiders without allegiances to organizational traditions and not affiliated with past failures (Murphy, 2008). This literature supports the USDE’s stipulation for a principal to be replaced in all intervention models. Swapping principals alone is not enough and Murphy (2008) cautions that the benefits of CEO change depend on the quality of the replacement.

To further emphasize the critical role played by school leadership, Murphy (2008) asserts that all other elements of turnaround are dependent upon leadership. As in other sectors, turning around chronically underperforming schools should be recognized as a distinct professional discipline that requires specialized experience, training, and support (Calkins, Guenther, Belfore, & Lash, 2007). Not every principal is capable of successfully turning a school around (Duke, 2004). Principals who succeed in maintaining better performing schools are likely to differ from successful turnaround principals (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). Since a turnaround school is a “prime
candidate for planned discontinuity” (Fullan, 2006, p. 30), where the leader must identify and discontinue awful performance and redirect the school in a positive way, the type of leadership necessary to diagnose and implement strategic, radical change is unique.

Generally speaking, all principals need to stay current in their practice and continue to grow and expand their toolbox of leadership strategies. There are new pressures and skills required of all principals in the 21st Century, but these pressures and skills are exponential for turnaround principals. While the role ambiguity and overload described by principals in schools embarking on massive change are currently dominant, the work of turnaround leaders is suggested to be a hybrid of the classic manager role and start-up leader role (Public Impact, 2005). As classic managers, they must operate within an existing larger organization, the school district, where access to resources and support to try something new is determined by complex relationships. But as with start-up leaders, they are expected to produce critical results with lightning speed (Public Impact, 2005).

A journalist recording her observations of turnaround leaders in action eloquently suggests that turnaround leaders are:

…part CEO, armed with research, plans, data targets, and checkpoints, part cowboy, doing what needs doing and asking questions (or forgiveness) later; and part surrogate mom, touching students and teachers in a way that raises each individual’s game and encourages risks and collective actions that yield success. (Pappano, 2010, p. 78)
The complexity of this role is apparent and the challenge can be very luring for ambitious, focused administrators who can balance these tensions. Duke, the research director of a university-based turnaround leadership program, provides a general description of a turnaround principal. “A turnaround principal is a pragmatic leader who can use a variety of strategies and approaches to reverse the downward spiral of a low-performing school” (Duke, 2004, p. 13). “Pragmatic” and “variety of strategies and approaches” are ambiguous descriptions of the competencies necessary for a turnaround leader. In the next section, the skills necessary for leaders of organizational turnarounds will be unpacked and clarified using the available literature.

**Turnaround leadership competencies.**

Public Impact (2008), using Spencer and Spencer’s work competencies model (1993) in combination with the research in organizational recovery, proposed a set of competencies for successful school turnaround leaders. These recommended competencies can be used to help people determine actions to achieve turnarounds across sectors as well as a tool to select leaders. A competency is a pattern of thinking, feeling, acting or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a position (Public Impact, 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Steiner & Hassel, 2011). Since the turnaround approach in education is in its infancy, hiring leaders who have turnaround experience is not a viable option in most cases. As a leader accepting the challenge to turn around a low-performing school, having a set of preliminary competences to use as a framework could provide clarity to this new type of leadership and the opportunity to reflect on areas for growth.
Working backward, the Public Impact (2008) team identified the turnaround leadership patterns of actions, speaking and thinking that prevailed in successful organizational recovery efforts and then identified the school turnaround leader competencies in relation to these actions. School leaders trying turnarounds must stay focused on accomplishing the most critical, consistent success actions. In nearly all cases, leaders of successful turnarounds take these actions: “identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs, break organization norms or rules, and act quickly in a fast cycle” (Public Impact, 2008, p. 5). Successful turnaround leaders often achieve results by working around rules, notoriously asking for forgiveness after their strategy has worked rather than seeking permission beforehand (Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009; Pappano, 2010). Deviating from existing practices that contributed to the initial failure is required to achieve early wins.

The competencies needed for a school turnaround leader to successfully take these actions have been organized into four clusters of related capabilities. The clusters include the following: driving for results; influencing results; problem solving; and showing confidence to lead (Public Impact, 2008). The figure below provides an overview of these four clusters and the eleven competencies distributed across categories.
Two of the ten competencies within these four clusters have been identified as critical competencies and are recommended to be used to screen candidates before moving into the other areas. The primary critical competencies for turnaround leader are achievement and impact and influence (Public Impact, 2008). *Achievement*, “the drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers” (p. 9), is a competency that falls into the driving-for-results cluster, while *Impact and Influence*, “acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking and actions of others” (p. 9), is in the influencing-for-results cluster. Public Impact suggests that the actions required for turnaround leaders to be successful (identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs, break organization norms or rules, and act quickly in a fast cycle) are unlikely to be attained without these two competencies. Ideally these
competencies would be validated in follow-up research on more and less successful school turnaround leaders (Public Impact, 2008) as the practice of turnaround leadership is studied in greater depth.

In addition to the three focused actions and the development of the four competency clusters, the support for dramatic change the leader receives from the district, state, and/or other governing authority is a major factor affecting turnaround success (Steiner & Hassel, 2011). After an in-depth analysis of the literature outside the field of education on organizational turnarounds, Hassel and Hassel (2009) discovered that successful turnaround leaders work in an environment that provides what they call “the big yes” where support from the greater organization is given to the leader so that dramatic change can be made. To achieve success, turnaround principals must depart from the way things have been done in the past, which in many cases directly conflicts with standard district policy and practice (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). In some cases, memorandums of understanding, which permit innovative practice, are constructed. State education agencies can apply pressure at the local level to allow for leeway in policies and practices at the school level. The literature predicts that turnaround success may be dependent on practices that are contrary to the status quo. The larger organization needs to respond with support that allows for turnaround leaders to make dramatic changes.

Contextual influences.

Leithwood, Harris and Strauss (2010), in their study of turnaround leadership, agree that there is a common set of leadership practices used by successful leaders in
almost all contexts. These practices enable leaders to obtain several outcomes related to turnaround success such as these: create a widely agreed-on sense of direction for the organization; develop the capacities of organizational members to move the organization in that direction; redesign or restructure the organization to support people’s work; and manage the ‘technical core’ of the organization – teaching and learning processes. In addition to these common practices, successful leaders are also attentively sensitive to the contexts in which they find themselves (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). Hallinger (2003), after studying school leadership for decades, contends that it is virtually meaningless to study school leadership without reference to the school context.

To identify some of the contextual variations impacting the role of turnaround leadership, Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz and Levy (2007) conducted a comparison of principals’ perceptions of problematic conditions in which 19 principals from low-performing elementary and middle schools participated. These principals were part of the third cohort of leaders participating in the University of Virginia’s School Turnaround Specialist Program (STSP). Twenty-four perceived problematic conditions perceived to affect school effectiveness in Virginia’s schools were identified in a study of the first two cohorts in the STSP. The mean number of perceived problematic conditions of the third cohort (the study participants) was 12.3 indicating an overwhelming number of complex issues leaders need to address. Only one condition was shared by all 19 principals – low reading achievement. Personnel problems were indicated in 18 of the schools. One implication of these findings is that low-performing schools frequently shared some similar problems, but that no two are perceived to confront identical challenges (Duke,
Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008). These differences in contextual factors reiterates that there is no silver bullet, and substantiates the necessity for differentiated leadership where research-based turnaround leadership practices are used based on priorities directed by local context and data.

The large number of schools nationally receiving turnaround funds through the SIG program, 843 schools from 49 states and the District of Columbia (Jambulapati, 2011), and additional thousands of schools in which too many students are failing to learn demands a large supply of turnaround leaders (Public Impact, 2008). Steiner and Hassel (2011) report that studies across sectors suggest that “only 30 percent of turnaround efforts succeed” (p. 2). Turning a school around is extraordinarily challenging work. With much of a turnaround’s success resting on the strength and skill of school leadership, much attention must be given to building the capacity of leaders to increase the rate of turnaround success in education. “If we do not do something to increase the internal capacity of turnaround (really, all) schools, we will spend the rest of our days mired in the awful-to-adequate stew of failed reform” (Fullan, 2006, p. 27). Building capacity does not happen accidentally. With intentionality, programs to support school leaders in acquiring the necessary skills for turnaround success are being created (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008; Louisiana Educational Leaders Network, 2010). In the next section, school turnaround specialist programs will be examined to understand how they are helping school leaders change their practice in the midst of turnaround efforts.
**Turnaround leadership preparation.**

Preparing school leaders for successful turnaround is not part of administrator preparation programs. “Most educational administration programs are designed to train principals, central-office staff, and superintenidents to be managers rather than visionary leaders” (Lezotte, 1994, p. 3). The gap in knowledge, skills and dispositions of school leaders to address the needs of turnaround schools was recognized in 2004 when the first school turnaround specialist program was created.

Researchers at Public Impact, an education policy and management consulting firm, gathered information from interviews of the directors of the two largest national- and state-level turnaround leader training programs. Both directors indicated that they use the non-education turnaround literature as a major basis for their program content (Public Impact, 2005). The first school turnaround specialist program was formed in 2004 as a partnership between the University of Virginia’s (UVA) Curry School of Education and the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration to provide executive leadership training for principals to turn around low-performing schools (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008). In 2006, this program expanded and opened its doors for national participants with a new cohort admitted each year. Shortly after the start of UVA’s program, the Louisiana State Department of Education initiated its own program and has partnered with seven universities across the state to provide regional access to this support and development.

The University of Virginia’s intervention effort involves the recruitment, training, and ongoing support of school turnaround specialists. These principals are given three
years to turn around a low-performing school while they are enrolled in the program. They participate in this application-based training program to help them learn and enact strategies to dramatically boost achievement in persistently low-performing schools (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008). Louisiana’s program is similar with a three-year time frame and curricular content modeled from the work of UVA’s program, and the participants in Louisiana’s program are required to be a principal at a state-designated, chronically underperforming school at the time of application into the program. In Louisiana’s program, gains in student achievement at the end of the program are necessary to receive certification endorsement from this program (Louisiana Educational Leaders Network, 2010).

The training model for UVA’s school turnaround specialist program involves eleven key elements, including a blended curriculum, case-study-based instruction, situated practice, blended faculty, a system for tracking progress, support teams, peer coaches, networking, a customized research component, credentialing, and incentives (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008). The architects of this program, representing both education and business sectors, identified advanced topics of particular relevance to individuals expected to lead organizational change. Among these advanced topics are the following:

a. Mission and operations alignment
b. Vertical and horizontal teaming
c. Effective communication with stakeholders
d. Tacit knowledge and the cultivation of faculty expertise
e. Performance diagnostics and organizational troubleshooting
f. Effective instructional intervention
g. Data-driven decision making
h. Mobilization of community resources, and

This list of curricular components provides insight into the important skills that turnaround leaders need, which are different, and in some cases topically separate from the components of traditional administrator preparation programs. All participants have already completed administrator preparation requirements which have not adequately prepared them to lead school turnaround.

Louisiana’s program focuses on communication, strategic planning, analyzing data, personnel issues, and providing meaningful professional development for teachers (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010). These themes are similar to UVA’s topics, but are broader categories. Both programs use the turnaround leadership competency framework proposed by Public Impact (2008). This provides an example of partial alignment across these two programs in the additional skills and competencies necessary for school turnaround success.

The first cohort in UVA’s program participated in a research study with two goals: identify the perceived conditions that contribute to persistent low-performance and determine if these conditions changed over the course of the program (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2007). Cross-case analyses were conducted. Both commonalities
and differences across the five cases (four elementary and one middle school) and the unique circumstances and contexts were noted. Two commonly identified challenges were low reading achievement and personnel problems. In follow-up studies, these same two challenges consistently rise to the top of identified conditions in turnaround schools. All other conditions were not shared by all five schools in the study. There was a wide range of problematic conditions from six to 18 of the 24 total conditions identified. At the end of two years, participants were surveyed to determine if the conditions had been eliminated, mostly corrected, partly corrected, or remained uncorrected. The findings suggest that many of the problems perceived by principals are difficult to eliminate entirely – they may require continuing attention, at least in the short term. “The overarching challenge of school turnaround leadership may have more to do with problem management and persistence than problem elimination or prevention” (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008, p. 151). In most cases, the school turnaround specialists managed to raise student achievement despite the fact that the conditions perceived to cause low performance had not been completely eliminated (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008).

Preparing school leaders to take on the challenges of persistently low-performing schools and engage in a turnaround effort with successful results requires more than a few additional tools and strategies. The design of UVA’s and Louisiana’s school turnaround specialist programs demonstrate that it takes time to gain the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to make enduring, drastic changes to organizations with
engrained cultures of failure. The three-year cohort experience may be a necessary time frame to build endurance and habituate the practices of turnaround leadership.

**Transformational leadership.**

Transformational leadership, a change-oriented type of leadership, emerged in school research in the 1990s due to the school reform movement sparking a close examination of the leadership capacity necessary to facilitate organizational change. Bass (1985), in his study of non-education organizational change, asserts that the leader transforms and motivates followers by making them more aware of the importance of organizational outcomes and convincing them to bypass their own self-interest for the sake of the organization. In Bass and Avolio’s (1990) research of transformational leadership, they identified four dimensions of transformational leadership – idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. These components were the starting place for research in educational settings of transformational leadership.

Sergiovanni (1991) describes transformational leadership in terms of three components of leadership: building, bonding and banking. Building refers to practices that lead to raised expectations and motivation to higher levels of commitment and performance such as empowerment, symbolic leadership and charisma. Bonding elevates organizational goals and purposes which bind people together in moral commitment to the cause. Banking takes organizational improvements and turns them into routine practices so they become part of the new engrained culture of the school. Sergiovanni (1991) also believes that transformational leadership requires reflection and the ability to
see and communicate the big picture. There is a balancing act required of transformational leaders in which they are working alongside personnel to guide, encourage, and inspire while at the same time maintaining an organizational perspective allowing for obstacles to be predicted and addressed before they become problems.

The literature on turnaround leadership does not reference transformational leadership or the relationship between these two change-oriented leadership approaches. In an effort to understand turnaround leadership more fully, an examination of the widely-measured attributes of transformational school leadership framework follows.

**Transformational leadership behaviors.**

Leithwood and his colleagues (e.g., Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996) have been instrumental in the study of transformational leadership in the educational setting these past two decades. Leithwood studied and refined Bass and Avolio’s (1990) framework from the non-education sector to create a transformational leadership framework for education (Hallinger, 2003). Over time, conceptions of transformational leadership have become more complex and sensitive to context (Yukl, 2002), yet the measurement of transformational leadership behaviors (TLB) does not necessarily reflect this complexity (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

In 2005, Leithwood and Jantzi reviewed 32 empirical studies of transformational forms of leadership in schools and identified three broad categories of TLBs according to their immediate intended outcome – setting directions, helping people, and redesigning
the organization. Nine behaviors within these categories were identified as being measured frequently in the 32 studies – vision; group goals; high-performance expectations; individualized consideration/support; intellectual stimulation; modeling key values and practices; helping to build collaborative cultures; creating structures to foster collaboration; building productive relations with parents and the community (see Figure 2.2). Leithwood and Jantzi found the “helping people” category to be measured most frequently followed by “setting directions”. The last category, “redesigning the organization” is the least studied dimension of TLBs and further research is recommended in this area. From this review of the transformational school leadership research, it was found that context determines the specific enactment of effective transformational leadership behaviors (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Perhaps when the change context becomes drastic and immediate, as in the case of school turnaround, the leadership behaviors necessary for success falls outside the realm of transformational and into a more specialized type of change-oriented leadership.

A notable critique of transformational leadership comes from Marks and Printy’s research (2003). While they agree that the focus placed on vision-building by transformational school leaders can create a sense of higher purpose in the organization, transformational leadership is missing an explicit focus on teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). Using data from the School Restructuring Study conducted by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Marks and Printy (2003) inquired into the relationship of both transformational and shared instructional leadership to the pedagogical practice of teachers and to student
performance. They found that transformational leadership is a prerequisite to shared instructional leadership. In other words, shared instructional leadership did not exist without transformational leadership. “Shared instructional leadership will not develop unless it is intentionally sought and fostered” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 392). When this integrated leadership was present – transformational and shared instructional leadership together – teachers provided evidence of high quality pedagogy and students performed at high levels (Marks & Printy, 2003). Their findings demonstrate the importance of cultivating teacher leadership for enhanced school performance, a missing dimension of transformational leadership.

In Leithwood and Jantzi’s (1999) study of transformational leadership they were able to demonstrate that transformational leadership had strong direct effects on school conditions (.80). They were also able to show that school conditions had strong direct effects on classroom conditions (.62). Together, transformational leadership and school conditions explain 17% of the variation in classroom conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 467). This study substantiates the weakness identified by Marks and Printy. Leithwood and Jantzi’s findings demonstrate the strong impact transformational leadership practices have on the culture of the school or school conditions and the resulting indirect effect on classroom conditions. Their findings did not demonstrate a substantial influence of transformational leadership on teaching and learning. Transformational leadership alone is not enough to transform teaching and learning practices.
**Turnaround vs. transformational leadership.**

Unlike transformational leadership, the dimensions of turnaround leadership have not been empirically studied in educational settings. The recommended actions for turnaround leaders is based on a review of the cross-sector evidence (Public Impact, 2007) and are beginning to draw attention from practitioners and policy-makers. Three of the most important early turnaround actions for leaders of successful turnarounds include: identify and focus on a few early wins with big payoffs; break organization norms or rules; and act quickly in a fast cycle (Public Impact, 2007). The conceptual framework for turnaround leadership can be seen as being more intense, characteristic of the “fast cycle” of change that appears to operate in many successful turnarounds. In Figure 2.2, transformational leadership behaviors and turnaround leadership actions are presented in an effort to inspire comparison. Figure 2.3 presents these leadership approaches in a visual way, demonstrating that although there are similarities between these approaches (i.e., vision, group goals, high expectations, building collaborative cultures, and building productive relationships), there are many striking differences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transformational Leadership</strong></th>
<th><strong>Turnaround Leadership Actions</strong></th>
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</table>
| **Behaviors**  
(Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) | **Actions**  
(Public Impact, 2007) |
| **Setting Directions:**  
- Vision  
- Group Goals  
- High-performance expectations | **Initial Analysis and Problem Solving:**  
- Collect and analyze data  
- Make action plan based on data |
| **Helping People:**  
- Individualized consideration/support  
- Intellectual stimulation  
- Model key values and practices | **Driving for Results:**  
- Concentrate on big, fast payoffs in year 1  
- Implement practices even if they require deviation  
- Require all staff to change  
- Make necessary staff replacements  
- Focus on successful tactics; halt others  
- Do not tout progress as ultimate success |
| **Redesigning the Organization:**  
- Build collaborative cultures  
- Create structures to foster collaboration  
- Build productive relations with parents and the community | **Influencing Inside and Outside the Organization:**  
- Communicate a positive vision  
- Help staff personally feel problems  
- Gain support of key influencers  
- Silence critics with speedy success |
| **Measuring, Reporting (and Improving):**  
- Measure and report progress frequently  
- Require decision-makers to share data and problem solve |  |

**Similarities**
- Vision (communicate a positive vision)
- Group goals (action plan)
- High expectations (focus on successful tactics; halt others)
- Build collaborative cultures (help staff personally feel problems; require decision-makers to share data and problem solve)
- Building productive relations with parents and the community (gain support of key influencers – inside and outside the organization)

Figure 2.2 Transformational and Turnaround Leadership Actions

Both transformational and turnaround leadership are more focused on creating the conditions for instructional change, than they are explicitly focused on being direct levers of change in teaching and learning. They both focus on creating a change-oriented
community with a strong vision and goals guiding practice, and relationships being nurtured. Although both have elements of collaborative culture, transformational leadership has additional collaborative elements that are not part of the turnaround approach.

Figure 2.3 Visual Comparison of Transformational and Turnaround Leadership

Transformational leadership behaviors emphasize the provision of support, intellectual stimulation, and modeling of expected practices. These behaviors are reflective of a nurturing environment in which teachers are shown what to do and helped to change their practice. In contrast, turnaround leadership actions such as making necessary staff changes and requiring all staff to change reflect a more matter-of-fact environment; one that clearly communicates urgency. Turnaround is distinguishably data-
driven with data used to establish and frequently monitor an action plan, and fast-paced with fast-payoffs and speedy success as one of its primary targets early in the process.

While the suitability or effectiveness of a particular leadership model is determined by the external environment and the local context of the school (Hallinger, 2003), all school leadership needs an appropriate amount of instructional focus. Leading a drastic change effort, such as a turnaround, may not lend itself to taking on other additional responsibilities such as instructional leadership. While there is a definitive absence of collaboration in the initial stages of turnaround leadership and a separation from the work of direct instructional leadership, it seems likely to call for shared instructional leadership practices as a complement to turnaround leadership. Similar to Marks’s and Printy’s (2003) noted absence of instructional leadership in the transformational leadership model, instructional leadership may be even more absent from turnaround leadership.

A foundational principle in turnaround leadership is maintaining a focus on organizational priorities. The additional responsibility of instructional leadership would not be advantageous to the role of turnaround leader. Instead, it might be detrimental. Turnaround leaders need to create the space for others to lead alongside them and for others to own the change efforts at the classroom level. If turnaround is a specialized form of transformational leadership applied in extreme conditions to failing schools, as I am suggesting, then shared instructional leadership has to be a non-negotiable.
**Turnaround partnerships.**

Collins (2005), in his monograph entitled, *Good to Great and the Social Sector*, makes a stark contrast in power structures between business and social-sector organizations. He asserts that authority in the social sector does not come from power, but rather from genuine leadership. “True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to” (Collins, 2005, p. 13). The diffuse power structures common to social sector organizations, such as schools, make governance much more complex. Collins (2005) hypothesizes that there are two types of leadership skill: executive and legislative. In executive leadership, the leader has enough power to make decisions, while in legislative leadership, the leader relies more upon “persuasion, political currency, and shared interests to create the conditions for the right decision to happen” (p. 11). Schools require a tremendous amount of legislative leadership. When a turnaround model is adopted, the ability to balance and monitor these two leadership skills can be daunting.

To exercise legislative leadership in a school requires a turnaround leader to invest time and energy in the development of a partnership with the faculty. The indicators of a successful school turnaround effort are tied to student performance measures. Since the quality of teaching is the most influential factor in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997), the partnership between leadership and teachers is essential. Research reveals that learning-focused leaders provide both direct aid and indirect support to teachers as they attempt to make changes in their instructional practice.
(Murphy, 2007). Leaders devote abundant time to supporting colleagues in their efforts to strengthen teaching and learning in and across classrooms (Murphy, 2007).

As a turnaround leader assumes his or her position at a school, the staff, especially in a school implementing the USDE’s transformation model of intervention, most likely will remain constant. Duke (2004) cautions that turnaround principals should be prepared to work with a variety of staff emotion, from frustration and disappointment to anger and anxiety. “No one enjoys being part of a low-performing school” (Duke, 2004, p. 16). He advises that it is unlikely that a school can be turned around unless faculty members are helped to confront their feelings in an honest and open manner (Duke, 2004). Counseling may be an additional skill necessary to build strong partnerships with teachers.

Leithwood and Strauss (2009) interviewed teachers as part of their research on turnaround leadership. The teachers indicated the most valuable leadership behaviors were “providing resources, building a learning community (or collaborative culture) in the school, and ensuring adequate amounts and types of professional development” (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009, p. 27). Teachers were interested in learning new instructional strategies and connecting to a larger culture of learning. If these leadership behaviors are seen as valuable to teachers and the research demonstrates that early wins are critical for motivating staff and disempowering naysayers (Hassel & Hassel, 2009, p. 23), then turnaround leaders must acknowledge and address the issues of accessing resources, building learning community, and providing strategic professional learning opportunities.
Shared turnaround leadership.

The magnitude of competencies, actions, and context-specific tasks necessary for a turnaround leader to be successful seems almost impossible to grasp. Turning a school around is not a job for one person. Developing a collaborative culture throughout the turnaround process is part of the transition from the declining performance stage to crisis stabilization, yet it is a gradual process (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). Little evidence of research on shared leadership or teacher leadership in the turnaround literature was found, but scholars and practitioners in the field are recognizing that the demands placed on administrators to become instructional leaders in their schools while concurrently leading a turnaround initiative may be unrealistic if they cannot effectively delegate some aspects of their roles to others (Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Hassel and Hassel (2009) suggest that the most important early staff decision the turnaround leader should make is the selection of an organizer to drive the action plan. This person could be a member of the existing staff or someone new, and might be given power exceeding the person’s current title and tenure. This individual would ensure, for example, that analysis of student progress and instructional problem solving happened regularly and that evidence toward goals was being collected. Leaders should continually develop other leaders since this is at the heart of sustainability (Fullan, 2006). Further research needs to be done in the area of shared leadership within the turnaround context.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership models emerged in the 1980s from the research on effective schools (e.g., Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Krug, 1992). The idea that principals
should serve as instructional leaders, not just as school managers, is widely accepted among educators. The roles of education leaders have expanded during the past decade to include a larger focus on teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision making, and accountability (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

In practice, though, few principals act as genuine instructional leaders (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Instructional leadership requires regular, scheduled time in classrooms where teaching and learning occurs and many principals consider themselves fortunate if they can leave their office for more than 30 minutes a day (Buchen, 2002). Time is not the only barrier to being a successful instructional leader. Not all principals have the ability to be effective instructional leaders (Buchen, 2002). As head learner, instructional leadership necessitates pedagogical knowledge and skill in order to provide meaningful support to teachers. Effective school leaders must engage in “the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse – experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do” (Barth, 1990, p. 46). As the job description of the principal continues to expand in the context of change with additional responsibilities and skills necessary, work overload can easily occur. Priorities are set based on the daily demands of the principalship and the forces of accountability. In the midst of a turnaround initiative there are many competing priorities and instructional leadership can easily be forgotten or pushed aside.

The term instructional leadership has become part of the vernacular of education. It is used frequently and ambiguously. Perkins-Gough (2002) observes that a new consensus is emerging: instructional leadership cannot be separated from educational
leadership. Instructional leadership describes just about any situation in which an educational leader (principal, teacher, superintendent, etc.) makes decisions that impact the process of teaching and learning. Supervision and instructional leadership are often times used interchangeably, but these terms still remain the subject of theoretical debate among some scholars (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Researchers identify instructional leadership through behaviors, characteristics and decision-making processes (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Because of the wide-spread usage of this construct, multiple models of instructional leadership have been created by researchers in an attempt to add clarity. Although there is no consensus, five dimensions of instructional leadership are being more frequently studied by researchers: defining mission, managing curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching, monitoring student progress, and promoting instructional climate (Krug, 1992). Three models will be presented which accentuate the dimensions of instructional leadership that are important in school reform contexts.

**Reflection-Growth model of instructional leadership.**

Blase and Blase (1999), developed the Reflection-Growth (RG) model of instructional leadership based on the research of teachers’ perspectives of principals’ instructional leadership practices. Using an open-ended questionnaire, more than 800 teachers provided detailed descriptions of one characteristic of a principal with whom they worked that had a positive impact on their classroom teaching. They were also asked to provide the same information about a principal who had a negative impact on their classroom teaching. Through inductive analyses of the data, two major themes were
identified: talking with teachers to promote reflection (R) and promoting professional growth (G) (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Five primary talking strategies were found to have been used by effective instructional leaders to promote reflection with teachers: making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, and giving praise (Blase & Blase, 1999). Effective instructional leaders used six teacher development strategies to promote professional growth: emphasizing the study of teaching and learning, supporting collaboration efforts among educators, developing coaching relationships among educators, encouraging and supporting redesign of programs, applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and implementing action research to inform instructional decision making (Blase & Blase, 1999). These eleven reflection and growth strategies used by effective instructional leaders as identified by teachers in this exploratory study suggest that these leadership strategies have strong enhancing effects on teachers emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally (Blase & Blase, 1999). Some of the affective effects include positive impact on motivation, satisfaction, self-esteem, efficacy and security. Some of the behavioral effects include positive impact on innovation, teaching variety, risk-taking and planning.

In addition to the two over-arching themes of reflection and growth, three important subthemes were identified: teachers were given choice and discretion, interaction between teachers and the instructional leader were nonthreatening, and the instructional leader demonstrated authentic interest in supporting teachers (Blase &
Blase, 1999). Interestingly, these three subthemes are foundational understandings of widely accepted adult learning theories which promote empowerment, autonomy, and relevance (e.g., Knowles, 1975; Mezirow, 1991).

Of the eleven behaviors of instructional leaders identified by Blasé and Blasé (1999), only one is also part of the actions of turnaround leaders: encouraging and supporting redesign of programs. This is not to say that turnaround leaders do not or should not care about teacher reflection and growth. Instead, this demonstrates clearly that the focus of turnaround leadership is on saving a failing school, not on promoting teacher reflection and growth.

Murphy’s instructional leadership framework.

Murphy conducted a comprehensive and systematic review of the research and literature on instructional leadership in 1990. A framework for instructional leadership was created from this review. He suggests that instructional leadership has four dimensions: developing mission and goals; managing the educational production function; promoting an academic learning climate; and developing a supportive work environment (Murphy, 1990).

The first dimension, developing mission and goals, is fundamental in creating a sense of shared purpose and connecting efforts around a common vision (Murphy, 1990). Communicating this purpose and vision is done through the framing of school goals that embrace student learning for all students and using these goals to guide the daily activities of the school. The second dimension, managing the educational production
function, addresses the instructional management activities that support student learning (Murphy, 1990). These activities include, but are not limited to visiting classrooms, conferring with teachers, evaluating teacher practices, aligning the curriculum, providing feedback, and scheduling students based on their needs. Using data as an ongoing formative tool to monitor student progress and set direction for the school are also examples of this dimension. Promoting an academic learning climate, the third dimension of Murphy’s instructional leadership framework, encompasses the leader’s behaviors that influence the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the teachers, students and parents (Murphy, 1990). Establishing positive and high expectations, modeling learning, promoting ongoing learning for teachers, and maintaining high levels of visibility are all examples of principal behaviors that promote an academic learning climate. The final dimension of the framework, developing a supportive work environment, addresses the systems and structures that support teaching and learning (Murphy, 1990). When an instructional leader creates a safe and orderly learning environment, engages students in meaningful ways, secures community partnerships and resources, and collaborates with the staff, he provides a supportive work environment necessary for optimal learning to occur.

Murphy’s (1990) model of instructional leadership has several components that are similar to those required of turnaround leadership: developing mission and goals with data, setting high expectations, and establishing partnerships. While these elements demonstrate alignment between these two leadership approaches, it is moderate at best. Distinct differences still remain. Most of the functions of instructional leadership in Murphy’s model take place in the classroom or during the interaction between teacher
and leader (i.e., visiting classrooms, providing feedback, aligning curriculum, modeling learning). The few elements of this framework common to turnaround leadership all take place outside the classroom and are disconnected from teachers. The contrast between this framework of instructional leadership and the actions of turnaround leaders illuminates the absence of classroom-based leadership practices in turnaround leadership.

**Weber’s model of instructional leadership.**

Weber (1996) describes a shared instructional leadership model that includes both the administrators and the faculty as leaders. This model empowers others to be leaders in an effort to achieve a learning organization. He describes five areas or domains of work that require instructional leadership: defining the school’s mission, managing curriculum and instruction, promoting a positive learning climate, observing teachers, and assessing the school’s instructional program (Weber, 1996).

Defining the school’s mission is not an individual process in this model. It is a dynamic, collaborative process. Peter Senge (1990) suggests that a learning organization is where people share their personal vision or mental model and through collaboration co-construct a shared vision for the organization. Helping people to talk about what they value is a by-product of this process and even more important than writing down a vision statement (Weber, 1996).

Managing curriculum and instruction is also a shared process in Weber’s model. Since no one person can be an expert in all areas of the curriculum and in all research-based instructional models, an instructional leader collaborates with teachers to create
goals and set priorities. Instructional leaders should be aware of current trends, communicate priorities, and facilitate the usage of a common language for describing and analyzing teaching practices (Weber, 1996). Instructional teams should be engaged in managing curriculum and instruction (Niemeyer & Hatfield, 1989) which includes planning, implementation, staff development, instruction, and evaluation. “Making participation, and even leadership, accessible acknowledges that teachers’ contributions are powerful in improving the instructional program” (Weber, 1996, p. 263).

Weber (1996) builds the case for instructional leaders to promote a positive learning climate by resting on the research of Heck and Marcoulides (1990). They surveyed teachers and principals in California from schools that had either above average or below average performance for three years as measured by the California Assessment Program. Both elementary (16) and secondary schools (14) were surveyed representing 40% low-achieving schools and 60% high-achieving schools. They found that instructional leaders take these three actions to influence the learning climate of their schools: communicate instructional goals, establish high expectations for performance, and establish an orderly, positive learning environment with a clear discipline code (Heck & Marcoulides, 1990). Weber makes one addition to these actions and includes instructional leaders’ work to increase teachers’ commitment to the school through ongoing shared instructional leadership.

Observing and improving instruction is one of the most challenging and sensitive roles of the instructional leader (Weber, 1996). Weber emphasizes the possibility of mutual learning from observations and the potential for reciprocity as a way to overcome
barriers to effectively implementing observations to improve instruction. “Observations are opportunities for professional interactions, which means giving and taking information” (Weber, 1996, p. 271). In addition to observations, instructional leaders provide research findings to teachers and encourage continuous learning and ongoing discussions about researched-based approaches to teaching and learning.

The final component of Weber’s (1996) instructional leadership model is assessing the instructional program. He suggests a participative model of formatively monitoring the instructional program to determine progress toward goals and whether external support is needed, to gauge how well the curriculum is meeting its goals, to determine strengths and weaknesses and to determine needed resources. The instructional leader initiates and contributes to the ongoing assessment of the instructional program. An evidence-based assessment process is strongly encouraged.

Although Weber’s (1996) model of instructional leadership shares some commonalities with turnaround leadership – mission, goals, and high expectations – the approach taken by these two types of leadership is stark. In Weber’s model, the school’s mission, goals and high expectations are created collaboratively. Terms such as shared, participative, and collaborative are entrenched in the description of Weber’s model. Similar to Murphy’s model, the elements common to turnaround leadership are external to the heart of the school (i.e., the classroom). Each component of Weber’s model of instructional leadership is collaborative in nature and built on the empowerment of informal leaders. Therefore, this model can arguably be considered a model of shared instructional leadership. Weber describes the role of the principal as an agent of
instructional support who involves a whole school in pursuit of excellence in learning (Weber, 1996).

Through the examination of these three instructional leadership models, the differences between instructional and turnaround leadership becomes clear. Turnaround leadership, like transformational leadership focuses on movement and change, but turnaround is much more direct and abrupt in its approach. While transformational leadership has the potential to be collaborative and supportive, turnaround leadership is steadfast and intense in its focus on change. If the actions of instructional leadership which impact classroom practice are to be realized in a turnaround school, someone other than the principal will need to own the implementation.

**Shared instructional leadership.**

The addition of instructional leadership responsibilities to the exhaustive duties already assigned to the principal can promote rapid burn out, especially coupled with the demands of leading school turnaround. Glickman (1992) describes ideal instructional leadership as a collaborative endeavor – one that is shared with other colleagues. By examining high-performing schools, we can get a sense of the collaborative nature of instructional leadership that school leaders aspire to enact.

To understand the type of leadership visible in high-performing schools, Murphy (2007) examined three decades of research and determined that not all leadership is equal. A particular type of leadership is especially visible in high-performing schools and school districts and can best be labeled instructionally-focused leadership or learning-
focused leadership. Some of the characteristics of this type of leadership include the ability of leaders (a) to stay consistently focused on learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment, and (b) to make all the other dimensions of schooling work in the service of improved student learning (Murphy, 2007). The literature on school turnaround and turnaround leadership demonstrates an extraordinary focus on the second element of Murphy’s recommendations yet neglects a focus on learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment.

To shed light on the progress of school reform efforts, Leithwood (2010) conducted a review of 31 refereed, empirical studies from the past ten years to examine the characteristics of districts that have been especially successful in improving the achievement of students who are typically at risk of failure in schools. Most of these studies were conducted using case-study data collection methods, and most of these schools served a majority of disadvantaged, minority, or otherwise at-risk children. The characteristics of high-performing districts that are shared most frequently, as indicated by these studies, were job-embedded professional development for leaders and teachers noted in 21 studies and investing in instructional leadership noted in 16 studies. Both of these characteristics describe adult learning as a key characteristic in increased student learning. An implication of this study is the importance of creating a culture of learning for all members of a school community. This requires strong instructional leadership. Successful reform requires a coherent strategy (Leithwood, 2010) and this strategy cannot focus only on students or adults, but instead on both concurrently. Leaders of school
reform must learn new ways of doing business and attend to shifts in both student and adult learning.

Weiss and Cambone (2000) assert that bringing about change, particularly on the issues of instruction, curriculum, and school organization, requires effective change-oriented leadership, and Marks and Printy (2003) found that change-oriented leadership is a precursor to effective instructional leadership. Both leadership approaches are necessary, yet it is difficult for leaders to be both change-oriented and instructionally-focused in a turnaround environment. Perhaps splitting the principalship into two separate parts may turn out to be the best approach (Buchen, 2002).

Principals alone cannot provide all the leadership necessary to promote and sustain improvement over time (Donaldson, 2001). Weber (1996) argues that even if an instructional leader were not packaged as a principal, it would still be necessary to designate such a leader. “The leaderless-team approach to a school’s instructional program has powerful appeal, but a large group of professionals still needs a single point of contact and an active advocate for teaching and learning” (Weber, 1996, p. 254).

Another striking argument for shared instructional leadership across multiple positions is the tension between supervision and evaluation. These traditional roles of the principal are incompatible and have been at odds for years (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). Supervision is primarily formative, collegial and concerned with improving teaching effectiveness. Evaluation is summative, involves judgments, has legal
implications, and ultimately determines dismissal or retention of teachers. Evaluation and supervision are most effective when performed by different individuals (Weber, 1996).

To accomplish the tremendous work of turnaround, an effective leader needs to build leadership capacity through shared instructional leadership. Lambert (2002) refers to shared instructional leadership among professionals as “state of the art practice” (p. 40). Tapping into the complementary expertise of additional professionals to co-lead a turnaround effort may be an effective shared, yet separate integrated leadership approach.

**Conclusion**

A review of the scholarly literature reveals that the emphasis on school reform over the last 30 years and mandates to change educational practice have resulted in ongoing research in effective models of school reform and leadership in these contexts (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Rowan, Correnti, Miller, & Camburn, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Education policy has increased funding and efforts to help schools that are persistently low-performing (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010) by engaging persistently low-performing schools in the implementation of one of four turnaround models. Turnaround is a specialized type of school change process in which drastic measures are taken to turn an organization around in a short period of time (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Pappano, 2010). In an attempt to successfully implement turnaround strategies as a school reform effort, turnaround leadership is being closely studied inside and outside of the education sector (Murphy, 2008; Public Impact, 2005, 2008).
Despite what is known about turnaround leadership outside the education sector, a gap in literature exists in terms of school turnaround literature and its relationship to existing change-oriented leadership approaches widely studied in education such as transformational leadership. The relationship between turnaround and instructional leadership has also not been explored in the literature and scholarly research. Transformational leadership does not alone meet the instructional leadership needs of a changing organization (Marks & Printy, 2003), so it is reasonable to conclude that turnaround leadership alone will also not successfully meet the instructional needs of a drastically changing school. Through the addition of a separate leadership position, it may be possible for a school in the midst of turnaround to be effectively led through the turnaround process with a shared leadership model – a turnaround leader and an instructional leader.

The purpose of this research is to explore a leadership position referred to as “transformation coach” created in each school participating in a school turnaround effort in an urban school district in the southern region of the United States. This position is separate from the school principal, yet has similar responsibilities as an instructional leader as outlined in the job description (see Appendix A). Since this position functions in the context of ambitious change, it is unknown what leadership behaviors will be enacted and what will be the driving and restraining forces shaping the lived experiences of the transformation coach. In the next chapter I will outline the research design that I used to conduct qualitative research on the lived experience of being a transformation coach situated in a turnaround context.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of transformation coaches at persistently low-achieving secondary schools during the implementation of the transformation model of school turnaround funded by a federal school improvement grant (SIG). I believed that an understanding of the phenomenon of being a transformation coach would have benefit to both policy and practice. In seeking to understand this phenomenon, the study addressed one primary research question and two subquestions:

1. What is the lived experience of the transformation coach during the first year of implementation of the transformation intervention model?
   a. How do transformation coaches experience their role?
   b. What are the underlying themes revealed about the transformation coaches’ lived experience?

This chapter describes this study’s research methodology and includes discussions in the following areas: rationale for research approach, the role of the researcher, description of the research sample and sampling process, summary of information needed, overview of research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations, data analysis methods, and issues of trustworthiness.
Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative inquiry focuses on meaning in context and qualitative researchers are interested in increasing depth of understanding. Understanding an event, issue, or experience in order to gain meaning is the desired outcome of qualitative research. It is not product-oriented, but instead focuses on the process. Merriam (2009) indicates the purposes of qualitative research are to “achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14).

Qualitative researchers use inductive analysis where “researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses or theories” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). This “discovery-oriented” (Merriam, 2009, p. 7) research is advocated as the best strategy for exploring something new (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Naturalistically situated, qualitative research methods allow for the researcher to intimately know the object or phenomena of study and to provide it voice. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) indicate that studying things in their natural settings allows researchers to “attempt to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 4).

I selected qualitative research because of the novelty of the position which needed to be explored. I wanted to give voice to those who stepped into an unknown role as they navigated what it meant to be a transformation coach. Qualitative research has the ability to “reveal complexity” and can provide “thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader” (Miles &
Huberman, 1994, p. 10). To capture the authentic experience of the transformation coach and to gain a greater understanding, qualitative research methods were used.

**Rationale for Phenomenology Methodology**

Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative inquiry that seeks the meaning for several individuals of their “lived experiences” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9) of “a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). A lived experience in phenomenological studies means to bring to the fore the significance of individual experiences of the participants as conscious human beings (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is based on the assumption that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced” (Patton, 2002, p. 106). In phenomenology, the lived experience is unique to each individual, yet there is an assumption that the experiences of individuals with the same phenomenon have commonalities. This assumption of essence “becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study” (Patton, 2002, p. 106). Phenomenologists are “not interested in modern science’s efforts to categorize, simplify, and reduce phenomena to abstract laws” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24), but instead seek to enhance understanding or explore new meaning.

Being a transformation coach was a new adventure. It was a position created in response to a federally funded grant. Nothing was known about this role besides the anticipated work based on the requirements of the school improvement grant (SIG). Using a phenomenological approach allowed this role to be uncovered through the lived experiences of those who experienced it firsthand with the hope that establishing an
understanding of the shared essence would inform both policy and practice. Phenomenological methods encouraged the use of broad research questions to allow the participants to think deeply about their work and to assign personal meaning.

**Role of the Researcher**

As a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge and respect the importance of examining personal bias throughout the research process (Patton, 2002). “Investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). In this section, I will share my professional background, my point of view on the topic under investigation, and the steps I took to minimize the influence of these assumptions and frameworks.

At the time of this study, I had sixteen years of experience in the field of education. During the first six years when I was a classroom teacher, I attained advanced certification as a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) in the area of Early Adolescent English Language Arts. I also served in various leadership positions such as the local teachers’ union president and led the implementation of a comprehensive school reform model in the district that I was employed.

In the subsequent decade, I worked for several non-profit organizations that were instrumental in some of the largest privately-funded school reform initiatives such as small schools, early college, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), secondary literacy and P-16 councils. I facilitated the learning of state, district and school officials, designed and facilitated conferences, and provided ongoing support to
organizations in transition. Most of the leadership and support I provided was labeled with a descriptive title using the word “coach.” These titles included the following: NBCT candidate coach, school change coach, leadership coach, instructional coach, STEM coach, early college coach, and P-16 coach. I see myself as an “education coach” with a comprehensive set of experiences which have allowed me to gain an incredible amount of skills that can be applied to a multitude of situations in the field of education.

The project with the Oakfield Public Schools was getting started when I found myself in a position to support the work of the transformation coaches and became intrigued with the notion of being a transformation coach. With my personal coaching experience, I wondered where transformation coaching fit and what were the demands of this role. All of my coaching experience was done external to the school site as I worked for organizations in a supportive role of the reform initiatives being implemented. The transformation coach position was created as a full-time, job-embedded position, and all of the transformation coaches hired for this position in the Oakfield Public Schools had never experienced being a coach.

My work with this school district was through a national education organization that was selected to be the lead turnaround partner for the implementation of the school improvement grant (SIG). I was the only person within this organization with the experience necessary to support the implementation of a large-scale reform initiative and had the autonomy to do what was necessary for the school district to guide them through this process. The contract between the Oakfield Public Schools and the non-profit organization that I consulted for was established prior to the design of this study. This
study was designed in response to my curiosity about the role of the transformation coach and the potential impact a deeper understanding of this role could have on both practice and policy.

Since the qualitative researcher is “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15), it becomes critical that this human instrument is regulated to allow for the true essence of the inquiry to be discovered. Guba and Lincoln (1994) underscore this concern by explaining that what can be known is “inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group” (p. 110). Husserl, one of the fathers of the phenomenological tradition, introduced the concept of *epoche*, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment. Epoche is a process in which the investigator “brackets” or sets aside his or her experiences as much as possible. “Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or ‘subjectivities,’ it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). The process of epoche, also referred to as “bracketing,” is attempted through the use of reflective oral or written expression to regulate these assumptions. Moustakas (1994) admits that it is seldom perfectly achieved, but in the qualitative research field it is believed that by performing bracketing, “it becomes possible to focus on the intrinsic nature or phenomenology of conscious acts such as perceiving or remembering” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 19).

The perceptions represented in a phenomenological study need to be those of the participants as much as possible with the voice of the researcher minimized. In an effort
to regulate my own biases, I engaged in epoche on several occasions throughout the research process. In my epoche just before delving into the process of data explication, I reflected on some of the emotional struggles I faced when I experienced my role as a coach in the field of education.

I said "yes" to every opportunity because I wanted to learn. I struggled setting boundaries in the process and found myself setting up faux deadlines so that I could get my work done - I worked better under pressure. Coaching was all-consuming to me. I never felt like I could get everything done that was a priority. I struggled setting priorities and meeting deadlines. I was easily overwhelmed by the multiple political systems that I worked in as I coached in several school districts. I needed time to decompress. I needed someone to process my work and thoughts with. I needed to stay on top of the current research and best practice. I needed to know that I made a difference in the schools that I worked with and I could never figure out if I did. (Denise Snowden, epoche, March 6, 2012)

Through the process of bracketing I was able to reflect on my own experiences and manage their potential interference with this study. In addition to regulating the influences of my biases, assumptions and prior experiences, I also had to manage the dual roles I played. My role as the lead turnaround partner for the Oakfield Public Schools and my role as a researcher needed to be kept separate. I found myself struggling through a conflict of roles in the middle of an interview when I consciously shifted from being a researcher to being a coach. For example, during an interview with Sam, she was reflecting on health issues that were impacting her ability to do her job effectively. It was
also taking an emotional toll on her and she was communicating feelings of discouragement and despair. For a few minutes, I abandoned the purpose of the interview and began probing her to help her establish a proactive plan of action, “So are there a few teachers that you have a relationship with that you could go back and just focus on working with when you go back to school?” (Denise Snowden, interview with Sam, April 18, 2011). As I reflected on that interview, I wrote:

My inner dialogue was in conflict. I knew I wasn’t attending to the purpose of the research, but Sam really needed my support. She felt abandoned and isolated at that moment and was confiding in me. She was in such a vulnerable place and the only human thing for me to do was to respond to her genuine need. (Denise Snowden, field notes, April 18, 2011)

I recall one other time when I experienced a conflict in roles. This excerpt from my field notes, part of my ongoing bracketing process, demonstrates my attempt to regulate my inner dialogue.

I feel a strong similarity between Kelly and myself and had to work very hard to keep my affirmations and comments from becoming more conversational. I kept telling myself to just listen, listen, listen. Don’t interject. I’ve been a coach of leaders and teachers for so long that I can automatically coach without intending to. I’ve learned how to ask questions, redirect thinking, etc., and I need to continue to monitor the degree to which I do this while I’m in the role of
researcher. I don’t want to color the participant’s responses because I’m seeking true authenticity. (Denise Snowden, Field notes, March 8, 2011)

I found the process of ongoing bracketing or reflexivity was an effective tool as I worked to remain true to the purpose of the study and to represent the voice of the participants as fully as possible.

**Research Design Overview**

A paradigm, worldview or an interpretive framework is a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). A researcher’s paradigm reflects his or her philosophical assumptions regarding his “stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 16). In the social constructivist or interpretive paradigm “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). As a constructivist researcher, I recognized that my own background shapes my interpretation yet the goal of research in constructivism is to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Phenomenological methods provided the processes by which I could clear my lens of bias and assumptions which could impact the data interpretation. The constructivist worldview manifests in phenomenological studies where individuals describe their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).
A significant assumption embedded in this particular study was that it is possible to discover how people created meaning in their lives. As a phenomenologist, I worked to probe deeply into the phenomenon being studied and used careful description to represent the meaning constructed by the participants. Since the phenomenon being explored was contained in a bounded system (Smith, 1978), the study’s design was a phenomenological case study. “By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42). The unit of analysis or case in this particular study was the transformation coach. Since there were only five high school transformation coaches creating a bounded system, and it was difficult to separate the phenomenon’s variables from its context, this study lent itself well to a phenomenological case study design.

**Research Site**

Upon the realization that there was a new, unexplored position in education being implemented at each high school that received a school improvement grant in the Oakfield Public Schools, I developed a curiosity about the nature of this role and the type of support this position may need. I already had access to the school district, the school buildings, and the personnel. Establishing entrée for the purpose of this study was already in place.

The research site for this study was Oakfield Public Schools located in the southern United States. This school district or local education agency (LEA) received a school improvement grant from the state education agency (SEA) to support the turnaround efforts at four high schools. To qualify to receive a SIG, schools had to
demonstrate great need and a strong commitment to improvement. Great need was identified through the school’s status as a Title I school. The Title I schools with the greatest need were either (a) among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the state or (b) a high school that has had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 1). The four high schools in Oakfield Public Schools all qualified as Tier I, Title I schools and were the lowest performing of the ten high schools in the district. There were 88 total campuses in this school district and approximately 41,000 students during the 2010-2011 school-year. Demographically, the Oakfield Public Schools was very diverse: 29.5% African American; 29% Caucasian; 26% Hispanic; 7% Native American; 7% Other; and 1.5% Asian.

**Sampling Strategy**

Since the purpose of this study was to uncover the lived experience of being a transformation coach, only people who were transformation coaches were considered for participation. The position of transformation coach was created within the Oakfield Public Schools, so the population of transformation coaches was six. Two of the six transformation coaches worked in middle schools and the remaining four were assigned to high schools. Realizing that the experiences would be quite different in different contexts, homogenous sampling was used to select the sample from the high schools. The purpose of phenomenology is to understand the shared essence of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Using purposive homogeneous sampling aided in reducing contextual variation and in describing “some particular subgroup in depth” (Patton, 1990, p. 173).
Patton (1990) encourages the use of purposeful sampling in an effort to select “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169). Since phenomenological methods were being used requiring the study of multiple individuals, the sample needed to be the comprehensive set of high school transformation coaches in Oakfield Public Schools. Fortunately, all high school transformation coaches consented to participate in the study.

The Research Sample

The five participants in this study were the transformation coaches from each of the high schools implementing the transformation intervention model of school turnaround funded through a SIG during the 2010-2011 school-year. Originally there were only four participants, but a fifth participant was added when one took a leave of absence from her position with a few months remaining in the school-year. Her replacement was added to the study which made five total participants.

Participant Selection

Each transformation coach was individually asked if he/she would participate in this study in a face-to-face meeting. Everyone was willing to immediately provide their consent, but I asked them to wait the two days until my next visit to their school so they could consider any questions or concerns they had. They all willingly provided their written consent as required as part of the human subjects review board at my university: Alex, Peyton, Kelly, and Sam. As the school-year proceeded, one of the original transformation coaches, Sam, experienced increasingly difficult health issues and requested a leave of absence. Another coach in her school, Jordan, who was the
curriculum technology coach, assumed Sam’s responsibilities. Jordan, provided written consent to participate and was interviewed. A follow-up interview with Jordan was conducted during the subsequent school-year as she took on the role of transformation coach at another school. The participants in this study “were carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end can forge a common understanding” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62).

**Ethical Considerations: IRB approval**

To maintain research integrity and protect the study participants, I valued and adhered to codes of ethics in qualitative research. “Codes of ethics insist on safeguards to protect people’s identities and those of the research locations. Confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure” (Christians, 2000, p. 139).

This study was approved by the human subject review board at my university (see Appendix B) and all appropriate consent was obtained prior to commencing data collection. First, a letter of consent for this study from the Oakfield Public Schools’ superintendent (see Appendix C) was obtained and submitted with my application to conduct research to the institutional review board of my university. After receiving approval from the human subject review board, I obtained voluntary informed consent from all participants in written form. The written consent included these components:

- The purpose of the study and role of the participant;
- An invitation to voluntarily participate in the study and the opportunity to withdraw at any point in time without penalty;
• How the study findings will be used and with whom they may be shared;
• The number and length of the interviews;
• How the interviews will be recorded and stored;
• Confidentiality of the original files and the process of de-identification;
• The use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the location and participants; and
• Where they can direct their questions, concerns or complaints (see Appendix D).

In addition, each research participant was provided a copy of the letter of consent to keep for their personal records for future reference. The possibility of coercion or undue influence was minimized by providing time for each transformation coach to decide individually if he/she would consent to participate. Participants also had direct contact with the investigator so they could ask questions about the study in private at any time.

“In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings. Overlaying both the collection of data and the dissemination of findings is the researcher-participant relationship” (Merriam, 2009, p. 230). I did not want my already established relationships with the participants to influence their participation. Fortunately, the participants trusted me and were genuinely interested in discovering more about their role as transformation coaches.

Lee and Renzetti (1993) define a sensitive topic as “one that potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or the researched, the collection, holding and/or dissemination of research
data” (p. 5). If a deeply personal experience was shared within this study, it would be considered an area of sensitivity as defined by Lee and Renzetti. Risk was minimized when sensitive topics were shared through the actions of the investigator. I left the “informant the decision about whether to talk about a particular issue” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 98) and at one point I turned off the audio recorder to assure the participant that a sensitive issue would be held in strict confidence.

The reflective inquiry initiated through phenomenological methods has the potential to empower participants in their own work and deepen the knowledge of themselves in relation to the phenomenon. The participants were sharing their experience for the benefit of others. This giving of self for others is also disclosed in the consent process.

Although my first priority was to gather data, I had an ethical responsibility to respond to the human realities that unfolded during the data collection process. As explained earlier in this chapter, at one point I shifted my role in an interview with Sam in order to respond to the needs of the research participant. Maintaining researcher integrity was an ongoing process, not just a process of obtaining initial consent and protecting files and identity. Remaining fully engaged as a researcher, but also as a human being allowed me to respond appropriately to the arising needs of the study participants.
Overview of Information Needed

To effectively answer the research questions, I needed contextual, demographic and perceptual information from the transformation coaches. Through the design of semi-structured research questions, I was able to orient the participants to help them reflect on their perceived experiences, the contextual factors that influenced their experience, and their personal journey which led to their commitment to this role.

Since elements of context such as environment or culture may influence behavior (Lewin, 1935), it was essential to collect this type of information. I used research questions such as, “If you were a transformation coach in a different school, would your role change? Why? How?” in the second interview (see Appendix E), to help participants think about the influence of context on their role as transformation coach. Capturing contextual information provided me with opportunity to understand any organizational differences between and among the schools and how the role of the transformation coach was influenced by these differences.

Due to prolonged engagement, I knew the participants well prior to commencing the study, so basic demographic information was known. They were all close in age (within ten years), had similar educational experiences and all were female except one. As the data collection occurred, I paid attention to the stories shared by the transformation coaches and tried to establish if there were any noticeable differences by gender, but was unable to attribute any significance in experience to gender. The demographic information that I needed to understand for this study revolved around their professional experiences leading to the decision to become a transformation coach. I was
able to capture this type of demographic information through open-ended interview questions such as, “How did you find out about the position of becoming a transformation coach and what led you to the decision to submit your name for consideration?” in the first interview (see Appendix E). Rich stories of people, situations and preconceived understandings of transformation coaching were revealed.

The most critical information needed for this particular study was first-hand perceptual information. I needed to know how the transformation coaches experienced their role, how their experiences influenced their decisions and priorities, how they perceived their role in relation to others, if their perceptions were constant or changed over time, and what they perceived as important or unimportant to their role. I needed to know what they believed to be true, so questions were crafted such as, “How is your actual work the same or different from your initial understanding of the role?” and “How has your role evolved over the course of this year?” (see Appendix E).

Through the intentional design of interview questions, I was able to gather rich descriptive information that was contextual, demographic and perceptual. This data allowed me to understand the experience of being a transformation coach in a holistic way.

Data Collection Methods

Prior to data collection, I conducted a selected literature review of the existing scholarly research and identified the gaps that existed in relationship to school turnaround, turnaround leadership, and instructional leadership. Although the literature
review informed the study, it is not data to be collected. The use of multiple methods was employed in an attempt to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this section I outline the data collection methods I used and the steps taken to carry out each method.

**Primary data source: interviews.**

The interview was selected as the primary data source for this study. The interview method is instrumental in eliciting rich descriptions of a phenomenon being studied. “To get at the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). The semi-structured life world interview is defined by Kvale (1996) as “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 6, emphasis in original). Since a phenomenological interview is one in which “the researcher attempts to uncover the essence of an individual’s experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 93) and open-ended questions yield descriptive data and stories about the phenomenon, a semi-structured interview protocol was used. Questions were used flexibly without a predetermined order allowing me to respond to new ideas and the situation at hand. The initial interview guide was written prior to commencing the study. Questions for the second and third interviews were developed as a result of the responses from the prior interviews (see Appendix E). Digital audio recordings of the interviews were made, they were transcribed verbatim and field notes from interviews were taken after the interviews while listening to the recordings. I postponed the recording of field
notes until I was alone because I wanted to remain fully present to the participants and not be distracted with writing responses or thoughts.

Three of the five participants were interviewed three times and the remaining two were interviewed twice. The three who were interviewed three times (Alex, Kelly and Peyton) were transformation coaches throughout the duration of the 2010-2011 school-year. All three interview protocols were used with these transformation coaches. The remaining two shared the position of transformation coach in the same school. For the majority of the school-year Sam was the transformation coach, but when she took a leave of absence, Jordan stepped into her role. I was able to interview Sam twice before her leave of absence using the first two interview protocols and Jordan twice after she became a transformation coach using all three interview protocols.

The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. I met with each transformation coach individually in the late afternoon or evening. During some of my visits, the transformation coaches’ lives were very busy after school hours, so I invited them to determine the best time and medium for conducting the interview. Interviews were conducted between March 2011 and March 2012. If the interviews were not conducted in person, they were administered by phone. Participants were provided with a copy of the interview protocol for each session.

Interview methods have strengths, especially for phenomenological case studies, but there are also limitations associated with interviewing. I anticipated an important challenge in qualitative interviewing, the presence of hierarchical relationships as
identified by Kvale (1996). While the participants acknowledged that I was guiding the interview, I often questioned them in response to their thinking and followed their path. Yin (2011) emphasizes that “by giving participants an opportunity to follow their own sequences, later analyses might reveal an important part of the participants’ perspectives” (p. 136). I shared my desire to understand their experiences and was transparent about my regard of them as experts in their roles. I never questioned their decisions, but instead honored them with a desire to understand the thinking behind their work. I cared deeply about their experiences.

**Secondary data source: documents and field notes.**

Although phenomenology can involve “a streamlined form of data collection by including only single or multiple interviews with participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62), I chose to use additional methods of data collection in an attempt to triangulate research methods and establish trustworthiness of the findings. In addition to interview data, I collected documents relevant to the experiences of the transformation coach and used my researcher field notes to enhance my understanding of their role. Some of the documents I collected include the job description (see Appendix A), annotated agendas from learning community sessions (see Appendix I), and researcher field notes (see Appendix F). The authenticity of the documents was assessed. I attained the job description from a contact in the personnel office at Oakfield Public Schools and the annotated agendas were from meetings in which I was present and the field notes were created by me.

Merriam shares commonly identified limitations in the use of documents in qualitative research, but counteracts the argument with their strengths.
Because they [documents] are produced for reasons other than research, they may be fragmentary, they may not fit the conceptual framework of the research, and their authenticity may be difficult to determine. However, because they exist independent of a research agenda, they are nonreactive, that is unaffected by the research process. They are a product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world. (Merriam, 2009, p. 156)

As secondary sources of data, documents and field notes were used primarily for supportive data to confirm or contradict findings and observations from the interview data. They provided another lens to explore the life world of the transformation coach.

**Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis**

Phenomenological case study analysis “attends to ferreting out the essence or basic structure of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 197) where the themes that describe the essence unfold and are iterative throughout the process of data explication. There are advantages of the researcher as primary research instrument. “The researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). As the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, I attended closely to the procedures of phenomenological research in an effort to clearly identify the essence of being a transformation coach. I implemented an analysis procedure based on Moustaka’s (1994) approach to phenomenological research.
First, I recognized a research problem that needed to be understood through common or shared experience of several individuals, identified the sample, received approval from the human subject institutional review board at my university and obtained consent from the school district and participants.

The job description for the transformation coach was originally coded (see Appendix A) to determine the focus for the literature review. The duties and responsibilities of the transformation coach fell into two broad categories – turnaround leadership and instructional leadership. The role of the transformation coach was part of a larger school reform movement called school turnaround. This led to the framework for the literature review. The importance of understanding this phenomenon is its potential implications for hiring practices, professional learning practice, policy and leadership.

After obtaining consent, I conducted the interviews and collected documents and recorded ongoing field notes. At the end of each interview, I reflected on the interview and listened to the audio recordings to gain insight. I held reflections and insights in my field notes (see Appendix F). Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a paid transcriptionist. I constructed the interview protocol for the second and third sets of interviews based on learnings recorded in field notes throughout this process.

Once the interviews were completed, I read the transcriptions of the interviews and used the review function in Microsoft Word to create comments as a way to memo my thoughts. Before entering into the reduction of the data, I engaged in epoche where “the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside” (Moustakas, 1994,
I then started explicating the data through the process of open coding. I did not attempt to create codes in advance or apply existing theories to the data. As a phenomenologist, I allowed the voice of the participants to speak to me through the use of phenomenological reduction. “Phenomenological reduction is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). When I named the codes, I was as descriptive as possible (see Appendix G). I constructed 32 open codes during explication of the data and used various text formatting functions within Word such as highlighting, colored font, text effects, and underlining to distinguish the codes.

I used the process of horizontalization to examine all of the data “as having equal weight, that is, all pieces of data have equal value at the initial data analysis stage. These data are then organized into clusters or themes” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). In horizontalization, “there is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96).

The content of the annotated agendas and researcher field notes were coded after the interviews were coded so that the themes that emerged from the primary source could be applied to the secondary sources. I was systematic, but not rigid in content analysis to allow for new categories to arise if present. “In judging the value of a data source, a researcher can ask whether it contains information or insights relevant to the research question and whether it can be acquired in a reasonably practical yet systematic manner” (Merriam, 2009, p. 153). The value of the annotated agendas was judged as minimal by me because little insight relevant to the research questions was found.
After the initial set of open codes, I performed categorical coding by grouping the open codes into categories (see Appendices G & H). Seven different categorical codes were identified and the dynamic of opposing tensions emerged as themes. “The data and emerging findings must feel saturated; that is, you begin to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). Five themes presented themselves in the form of tensions. The coded data was organized by theme, the findings were unearthed and rich description of the participants’ experiences organized around these five themes.

The findings were then interpreted and synthesized to tell the story of the lived experience of being a transformation coach. The product of a phenomenological study is a “composite description that presents the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence). Primarily this passage focuses on the common experiences of the participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). A composite description of the findings related to the five themes was presented. Recommendations for these findings were then organized by potential groups of interest including possible next steps for researchers.

**Issues of Verification**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified terminology to be used in qualitative research to represent criteria for verifying or judging the quality or goodness of qualitative inquiry called trustworthiness criteria. The criteria they suggested which parallels quantitative research were: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), and confirmability (objectivity). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also specified a set of procedures
that could be used to meet these criteria which include but is not limited to auditing, member checking and peer debriefing. In the following section, I will discuss how these trustworthiness criteria were addressed throughout this study.

**Credibility**

The credibility of qualitative inquiry is dependent on the credibility of the researcher since the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and “the interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their [researchers] observations and interviews” (Merriam, 2009, p. 214). Merriam continues by asserting that “we are thus ‘closer’ to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between us and the participants” (p. 214). The proximity of the researcher to the study is viewed as an internal validity strength of qualitative research. As suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1997), the techniques I employed to increase the credibility of this study were prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking.

**Prolonged engagement.**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), prolonged engagement is the “investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the ‘culture,’ testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of self or of the respondents, and building trust” (p. 301). Prior to commencing the study, I spent one week a month for four months for a total of four weeks at the research site establishing trusting relationships, understanding the context, and facilitating learning community processes. Through these experiences I was also able to establish my own credibility and integrity with the participants in the study as well as with their colleagues. Once the research commenced, I
collected data over several months. This prolonged engagement provided me with an opportunity to assess my own preconceptions and assumptions about the role of transformation coach.

**Triangulation.**

Triangulation is the use of multiple methods of data collection. I used interviews, documents, and field notes as sources of data for this study. “Using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). I was able to achieve triangulation through the use of multiple data sources as well as through the implementation of multiple interviews with the same people.

**Member checking.**

Member checking is when researchers “solicit feedback on your emerging findings from some of the people that you interviewed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). Member checking from Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) perspective is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314), because the researcher can test data, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions with the participants. Member checks were ongoing throughout this study. As understandings began to emerge, interview questions were designed to probe further into these preliminary concepts in an effort to authenticate with participants. I paraphrased to confirm understanding during interviews and used language such as “it sounds like,” “would you agree that,” “is it fair to say,” “is that true,” “is it correct to say.” Additionally, I telephoned several participants
to review themes that emerged from the data during the analysis phase before proceeding with the findings.

**Transferability**

Included among the features to be resisted in phenomenological studies is any interest in developing generalizations because they may distort the desired focus on the uniqueness of the events (Van Manen, 1990, p. 22). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the notion of *transferability*, in which “the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere” (p. 298). “The person who reads the study decides whether the findings can apply to his or her particular situation” (Merriam, 2009, p. 226). The use of rich, thick description enhances the possibility of the results of a qualitative study transferring to another setting. “The researcher has an obligation to provide enough detailed description of the study’s context to enable readers to compare the ‘fit’ with their situations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 226).

Within the present study, I addressed the transferability issue by providing contextual information about the research site, the specific components of the grant being implemented, and descriptive profiles of the participants. This range of information should provide others with enough background to determine if it aligns enough to allow these findings to be applied to their own context. This study’s sample also enhances transferability because it was comprehensive – all transformation coaches at the high school level participated in the study allowing for maximum variation. In the findings, thick descriptions of the themes that emerged are presented, again allowing for others to determine the degree of fit these findings and implications may have in another context.
Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the term “confirmability” parallels that of “objectivity” used in quantitative research. To achieve confirmability, the researcher must assure that the data, interpretations, and findings from the inquiry process are “grounded in events rather than the inquirer’s personal constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 324). To address the issue of confirmability, I established an audit trail by keeping a systematic research log of my activities, journaling, and memoing throughout the data collection and reduction processes. “An audit trail is established by researchers documenting the inquiry process through journaling and memoing, keeping a research log of all activities, developing a data collection chronology, and recording data analysis procedures clearly” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). This audit trail established the fact that the data and interpretations of this study were not merely fabrications of my imagination, but instead were products of a systematic process of qualitative research.

Applicability

Although the study’s findings are presumed credible and transferable, I acknowledge that every context is different which influences whether the findings and implications of this study are applicable. Pragmatic validation described by Kvale (1996), is “whatever assists us to take actions that produce the desired results” (p. 248). In chapter 6, I present implications this study holds for school principals, district turnaround leaders, district human resource personnel, university personnel in administrator preparation programs, and policy makers. This research is presented in a way that allows
for it to be accessible to each interest group so they can determine the actions inspired by these findings.

In this chapter, the research methodology was comprehensively outlined and discussed. To begin to understand the participants in this study, the following chapter presents profiles of each participant substantiated through their own voice.
Chapter 4: Portraits of Participants

This chapter details the portraits of the five participants in this study. The purpose of these portraits is to provide the reader with insight into who the participants are and why they became transformation coaches. Recognizing each participant’s background and disposition will provide the context for a deeper understanding of their perspective and their experiences. Appreciating why each participant entered into this role could benefit policy makers and human resource personnel as they seek to understand the role and demands of leaders in school turnaround environments.

All five of the participants taught in the same urban school district in a southwestern state. Each was a transformation coach in one of the schools receiving a federal school improvement grant (SIG). Three served in this position in three different schools. The other two transformation coaches assumed the position in the same school, but not concurrently. Jordan replaced Sam when she took a leave of absence from work. Categorized as Tier I and Title I, these schools are designated as one of the lowest performing schools in the country often referred to as persistently low-performing. None of the transformation coaches had ever assumed the role of “coach” before or worked in a school that had someone who served as a type of educational coach.
Alex

Alex was a second-career educator who originally graduated from college with a “degree in political science and a minor in math and cartography” (Interview, March 6, 2012). She left her first career because she “didn’t feel like I was giving anything back to the community” (Alex, interview, March 6, 2012). Alex’s dad and sister were both educators, so she thought she might find greater fulfillment in the field of education. She acquired an alternative certificate from the state department to teach and went into teaching and athletic coaching at the high school level. Prior to becoming an educator, Alex didn’t realize the amount of time necessary to be a successful teacher and athletic coach. After four years in the classroom, she returned to her first career because of burnout and the stark difference in compensation. After a few years, she again felt unfulfilled and decided to go back for a master’s degree in education and started teaching at a different school. She taught at this school for five years, acknowledging that she had “a good mentor teacher that helped me become a better teacher” (Alex, interview, March 6, 2012). She also accepted an opportunity for informal teacher leadership as a department head. Being an informal leader inspired her to pursue a master’s in administration so she could have greater influence in a formal leadership position.

Alex presented with confidence and openness. She saw herself as a life-long learner and admitted, “I don’t think you ever get to the point where you know everything. And I’m one of those people where I’m always wanting to improve” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). She continually used phrases like “status quo is the enemy” and
“complacency is the enemy of progress” to emphasize her desire to grow and be stretched in both her personal and professional lives.

As a parent of three children, Alex found it imperative to keep the students at the center of the discussion.

I think kids are sensitive to the identity of the teacher. I think that a teacher is the same person inside the classroom that he is outside the classroom. I don’t think that a person can care more for students in the classroom than they do outside the classroom. I don’t think they can be taught to care. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

This illustrated Alex’s ability to maintain the perspective of the student and to see what they see. She used her focus on students to increase her sense of urgency and to discern right from wrong in her decision-making.

Alex acknowledged credit where it was warranted. Multiple times throughout the three interviews, Alex would pause and cite research or refer to a colleague who said something memorable. “I’m a huge data person” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011) and she openly declared spending time sifting through research databases assuring that her recommendations to colleagues were based on empirical data. She enjoyed data so much that she wished she had more time to “identify and disseminate research to teachers” (Alex, SIG coaches’ learning community notes, January 11, 2011). She was comfortable in many roles and had the ability to adapt and to grow. “I’m comfortable knowing that I don’t know everything” (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011). This growth mindset has been
critical to Alex’s ability to adapt to this new position. She also has an optimistic mindset as evidenced by her statement, “Let’s do whatever it takes” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011).

Alex stepped into the role of transformation coach with great deliberation and intention. A couple of years prior to this position becoming available, Alex set her sights on becoming an administrator.

When I was a classroom teacher, I could impact, you know, a hundred kids. But as an administrator I can affect, you know, a hundred teachers who are affecting a hundred kids. And, I mean, that’s where I see myself. I mean, I want to transform education in some way. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Alex really liked the presence of formal authority to make changes in a school. She was invited by her former principal to consider the position of transformation coach at the high school where he had just been appointed as the new principal. He told Alex she’d be an assistant principal and indicated that there would be a substantial jump in pay for her and that it was “in my career ladder” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011).

At this point in her career, Alex was getting ready to finish her master’s in administration and had already passed her state administration test. “I thought that this was the perfect rung to get to where I wanted to be in education” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011).

My path is not coaching. It is administration. And it’s not at the school level. It’s district level and beyond. That’s where I see my future. But I also believe that
coaching can be a big part of that, because to understand the coaches’ role and to be successful at it would assist me in being a better administrator. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Alex told the hiring principal that she “didn’t want to go to a school that was a winner” (Interview, March 8, 2011). “You go to the team that didn’t win any games the year before, and if you win one game, you are a hero” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). This school has been on the “needs to improve” list for years, longer than any other school in the state without meeting AYP or safe harbor. Alex saw this as an “opportunity for me to prove myself” (Interview, March 8, 2011). Her candor and personal vision demonstrated clarity and confidence. One of Alex’s mantras that resonated was, “I always want to do the best I can do” (Interview, March 8, 2011).

Kelly

Kelly came from a family of educators. “My dad was a superintendent, my mom was a teacher. I went to five different schools, so I saw lots of educators, lots of people, lots of different ways to do things” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). In each interview, Kelly referred to her parents’ experiences as educators and their influence on her thinking and career choice.

My mom is one of the best teachers I’ve ever seen in my life and I’m not just saying that because she is my mom. She has a great relationship. She does outside of the box things - they’re always interactive. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)
Kelly comfortably followed in her parents’ footsteps, attained a bachelor’s degree in English education and settled into a local suburban school district teaching high school English and coaching athletics for fourteen years.

During her classroom tenure as a high school teacher, Kelly attained a master’s degree in curriculum and teaching, started working at the local community college as an adjunct professor and thought, “I’m good at this and maybe I want to teach college because I want to teach teachers how to teach” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). She questioned if she really wanted to be an administrator or whether - or not she wanted to work in higher education in teacher preparation. The experience of teaching at the community college led her to pursue a doctorate in education instead of seeking administrative certification. “I always wanted to be better than everyone else. That’s really why I went back to school. I just didn’t want a bachelor’s degree when everybody in the world has one” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). Kelly openly accepted challenges and strived to improve herself. Recently, Kelly earned a doctorate of philosophy in curriculum and social foundations. She has learned over time that she is very competitive. “I already knew that, but I didn’t realize how much though” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011).

Kelly was the only transformation coach who was not employed by the school district prior to stepping into this position. As a first-year employee in this urban school district, she felt as if she had to continually prove herself and her work ethic. She was taught as a young person that you don’t say “no” when asked to do something. After
several months at the school, Kelly admitted, “I’m still finding my place within the school” (Interview, March 8, 2011).

Kelly’s self-reflective nature presented itself throughout our time together. She described herself as a “perfectionist” on several occasions - and as a “people-pleaser” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). Her perfectionistic tendencies were apparent in other self-observations such as, “I didn’t realize that I liked to be in control and I didn’t realize that until recently” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011), as well as her admission that she doesn’t delegate well. Her people-pleasing was demonstrated in her constant attempts at validation throughout the interviews when she asked, “Do you think I covered it?” and “I didn’t answer that question very good, did I?” (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011).

Kelly saw herself as a continuous learner, especially in regard to her formal education. “I wanted to know more and I wanted to learn more” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). She took pride in “staying up-to-date on current research, current practices, and current professional development” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011), although she admitted that she spent much of her personal time staying current. Kelly saw learning as a reciprocal process with teaching and continued to be a learner while working. “I think that you’re constantly learning from your faculty. You’re constantly learning from your staff and their needs” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). Even during her first year as a transformation coach, Kelly continued teaching undergraduate courses in the evenings because “I have to teach. It’s a burning desire. It’s a passion. I have to teach.” (Interview, March 8, 2011).
Since Kelly was teaching outside of this school district when the position for transformation coach was posted, she learned about the opportunity from a friend who was an assistant principal at one of the SIG schools. Kelly declared she was “intrigued with the position” (Interview, March 8, 2011), but reluctant about working for this particular school district and unsure the exact nature of the position since there were no educational coaches in the school where she had been teaching. Her friend encouraged her to consider the position, telling Kelly what she needed to hear:

It would jump-start your career. This job was made for you. This is going to lead you into lots of different areas that I know you’re wanting to be in. You’re going to basically be in charge of this whole school. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Kelly saw this as a challenge that she wanted to conquer in order to move on to the next step in her career. “My dad was an administrator, and I always knew that’s eventually where I was going to head anyways. I didn’t know how long or when” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011).

One reason Kelly accepted this position was because “I eventually would be able to define this role. I could offer that professional development to new transformation coaches” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). She wanted to take on this challenge because it was new. She wanted to be able to define it and share her learnings with others.

You know I felt like I had a great background of teaching and with my PhD I had theory with practice and so I wanted to use those things to raise a school and I felt like if I achieved those goals, if I did achieve the SMART goals, and I achieved
all those things then I could basically write my ticket to whatever job I wanted to
be at. So, that’s what intrigued me most. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011).

Although Kelly’s rationale was very career-oriented, as she continued to reflect on her
initial interest in the position, she indicated that one of her research interests had been
multicultural education. She said, “I wanted to have a more diverse idea of multicultural
education…and I think this is one of the most diverse [schools] in the nation” (Kelly,
interview, June 30, 2011). The dynamics of the school – low-performing, multicultural,
and socioeconomically disadvantaged – caught her eye and she thought, “Wow, I could
really do some good here” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011).

**Peyton**

Prior to working in this school district, Peyton taught at a private school. He
started in this school district as a part-time teacher, was observed as having leadership
skills and became the magnet coordinator for two years at this high school. “As long as
I’ve been in this district, I’ve been in this building” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011).
He recalled the first year working with a few colleagues who diminished the value of his
prior experience at a private school. He admitted that this context is very challenging, but
that’s what he loved about it.

Peyton considered himself very direct in his approach to decision-making: “This
is what needs to be done. It’s logical. What’s the problem?” (Interview, March 10,
2011). He described himself as “compulsive” and “impatient” (Peyton, interview, April
29, 2011). In his prior role as magnet coordinator, he learned a great deal about himself
and his leadership strategies. “I had to learn how to stop and handle feelings and be very inclusive, when I would just – by nature I would be, okay, so here’s the problem, here’s a great solution, let’s do it. And you can’t do that” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011).

It was clear from the first moment I met Peyton that he was competent and confident. He interrogated me to determine my credibility, purpose, and authenticity. “I have high expectations for myself and others, and so I tend to be impatient when the things that obviously make sense and are the right thing to do for our school, for instance, don’t happen” (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011). His high expectations and commitment to doing the right thing for the school translated into integrity. Whenever he was uncertain, he took on the responsibility of finding the answers or possible solutions, “I need to research and educate myself” (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011). Peyton was a self-initiator and did not need anyone to direct or monitor him. He was his own accountability partner.

Peyton spent the prior two years as the magnet coordinator at the same high school in which he became the transformation coach. There was still one year remaining of the magnet grant when he was encouraged by his school’s new principal to lead the work of the school improvement grant. “I fully anticipated staying in my current position” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011). By this time it was “really close before school started” and his new principal asked him where he saw himself in five years. Peyton acknowledged, “I was interested in possibly moving into administration” (Interview, March 10, 2011), and was in the process of finishing up his master’s degree in
administration. Peyton reflected that becoming the transformation coach “was just the natural progression” (Interview, March 10, 2011).

One of the main reasons Peyton took on the role of transformation coach at his school was because “I don’t like to stagnate. I thrive on challenge. And I do get overwhelmed, and there are times when I need to take a step back...then I can come back stronger and better and ready to tackle the next thing” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011). He wanted to continually stretch himself and construct new systems from the ground up.

Every experience that I’ve had in education, from the time that I started…has been an uphill battle. Everything that I’ve done has always been, whatever it is, it’s in a mess. There’s not a lot of structure. There’s no systems—there are not any systems in place…but every task that I’ve taken on has been, there is essentially nothing there and I’ve built it from the ground up….so everything that I do, and I’ve noticed this before you asked this question, but I really, really enjoy building process. And then once it’s sustained, or sustainable, I’m bored. I’m done with it. It’s no longer a challenge and so I’m ready to move on. (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011)

Peyton did not present himself as overly concerned with how he performed in contrast to others. Instead of being competitive with others, he seemed very task-oriented and driven. He focused on the task that was before him and how he could create something where there was nothing. Underlying his drive to succeed was a mindset of possibility for
kids: “I think transformation is possible anywhere. Kids can learn. Teachers can teach with the right resources and the right support” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011).

Sam

Sam was a former teacher and administrator prior to becoming a transformation coach. Both her prior administrative and teaching experiences were at the elementary level. She taught inner-city students and recalled, “I’ve had first graders try to stab me with scissors” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). Sam believed all children are valuable and no challenge was seen as too big for her to tackle. “When I was a teacher, I made a vow that even before I saw their faces, that I would love them unconditionally. And that applies to everything” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011).

Born into a large family with two distinctive cultures – Japanese and Native American - Sam reflected on what she learned and accepted as her driving force. “In a family of six, it’s not about the praise, it’s about the mission. And you know, no matter what comes of the school, I intend to go down fighting. And so that’s why I’m doing this” (Interview, April 14, 2011). She saw helping people as her mission in life and described that her goal in all things was to see “people's shoulders drop,” which indicated you had “relieved a burden or gave them an idea” (Sam, interview, April 14, 2011).

Sam initially served in the position of curriculum technology coach, another SIG-funded coaching position in this school. The curriculum technology coach was a resource for teachers as they learned new technologies and digital tools and integrated these into their classroom instruction. Sam was comfortable with these tools and helped teachers
use them as part of their instructional repertoire in her prior work. When she first found out about this position, she recollected responding with enthusiasm. “I love technology. I love helping teachers. I love working with teachers. I love helping them get to where they need to be – where they want to be and where they need to be” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011).

Sam started in the position of curriculum technology coach late, after Labor Day which was about two weeks into the school-year, due to some issues with her transfer from the prior school within the district. She believed that the decision for her to transfer into the position of curriculum technology coach had not yet been finalized when she was asked to facilitate a technology-based training at this SIG high school. She recalled, “There was not an administrator in sight that morning. And so it was literally, to me, pitchforks and torches” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011). She thought it felt like a test and “before it was over, you know, I apologized to the entire staff” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011). Sam apologized for the situation itself. She felt that she was set up, but felt bad for the teachers who were asked to be there without understanding the true intention.

Although Sam started the school-year late and felt that she was put to the test, she still wanted to transfer into the position of curriculum technology coach. After several weeks in this position, the director of school turnaround met with Sam and her principal to ask her to step into the position of transformation coach within her school. “And my answer was, you know, I did not apply for that position, but you know, [principal’s name] knows my passion about this school” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011). Sam felt honored
to be considered for this role and at the same time felt frustrated because “I felt like I was finally coming to a point where I could spend time with the teachers and start creating relationships with them” (Interview, March 9, 2011). She had been working with teachers on technology issues and would have to straddle both roles for a while until a new curriculum technology coach was in place. By the end of October, a teacher from within the school, Jordan, had been designated the curriculum technology coach so Sam could focus solely on the responsibilities of being a transformation coach.

Personally, health issues plagued Sam. During our first interview, she mentioned four separate ongoing physical ailments she was dealing with, and during our second interview, an additional three conditions were described. Due to these health conditions, Sam was absent regularly throughout the school-year, and sometimes those absences occurred at critical points in the life of the school improvement grant. When I returned to work with her and conduct the final interview in May 2011, I found that she had taken a leave of absence for the remainder of the school-year due to her ongoing medical conditions.

**Jordan**

During the first year of the SIG, Jordan originally fulfilled the responsibilities of the curriculum technology coach. “I have a little bit of an advantage. I taught here before, so many of them [teachers] knew me” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011). As the year progressed and the transformation coach at her school was increasingly absent for extended periods of time leading to a leave of absence during the last couple months of the school-year, Jordan fulfilled the roles of both curriculum technology coach and
transformation coach. This shifting in roles started to become apparent in January 2011 when Jordan participated in a learning community experience in place of the official transformation coach at her school. I first interviewed her at the conclusion of the first year of the SIG in order to capture her experience as a transformation coach.

The school that Jordan worked in was one of several in the district that were restructured in a district-wide efficiency campaign at the end of the first year of the school improvement grant. This restructuring disqualified the school from continuing to receive SIG funds, so Jordan was without a job. Fortunately, one of the remaining SIG middle schools in the district had an opening for a transformation coach. Jordan enjoyed the role of transformation coach so much that during the second year of the grant she moved into this role at a middle school. The second interview I conducted with Jordan took place while she was a transformation coach at a middle school in the same district during the second year of the turnaround process.

Jordan’s career path was diverse non-traditional. After attaining a doctorate, she began her career in education at the community college. She taught for eight years at a community college and was an administrator at the college level for seven years. She left higher education and began working in K-12 education where she was a principal at a private school for two years and taught in K-12 for a total of five years. In addition, she home schooled her own children from grades K through 8. She indicated that her career was a bit choppy because “we were a military family and we moved a lot” (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012). She had been teaching at this SIG high school for two years prior to moving into the coaching role.
When Jordan was asked about the multitude of positions in education she held over the course of her career, she revealed her love of learning as a critical attribute that drove her to take on new challenges.

I’m always learning. It’s part of what I like to do. I am constantly, have CDs or books at home, so I spend a lot of my spare time, what little there is. But I enjoy doing that. So I try to keep a little bit ahead of the curve, but it is tough. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

She acknowledged working long hours, but she would never sacrifice her learning time. “There’s never enough time to learn the things that you need to learn” (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012).

Very few people could take on the responsibilities of two distinctive positions and not drown. Jordan described herself as someone who “isn’t easily flustered” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011) and had “a calm personality” (Interview, February 16, 2012). In this dual position, remaining calm was difficult, even for Jordan. She attributed another disposition for much of her objectivity: “I do not – I’m not moved by what people think” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011). She instead remained focused on the goal of her work and balanced both the big picture and the details within her mission to achieve outcomes for students’ benefit.
Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from data explication which deliberately and delicately exfoliate the essence of the lived experience of the transformation coach. Each theme is defined through the lens of the transformation coach and interpreted and extended by me. At the conclusion of this chapter, a composite description of the overall essence of being a transformation coach is presented.

Tension 1: Formal vs. Informal Authority

During the process of submitting the school improvement grant to the state department of education, the district assembled a job description for the transformation coach (see Appendix A). The qualifying education requirements were twofold: “master’s degree” and “administrative credential”. Three of the five transformation coaches met both of these requirements. Two did not have their administrative credential and one of them did not meet either requirement. All of the transformation coaches participating in this study felt that they were, to some degree, in an administrative position.

I can’t deny that I was very open to the idea of having an administrative, more like an assistant principal position, because that’s what’s in my career path. That’s what I’m looking to do. So I was very open to that. However, I can say that from the very beginning, that’s the way it was described to me, though. (Alex, interview, March 6, 2012)
There was much uncertainty about the classification of this role at the district level as well as at the building level. Although the job description specified the administrative credential as a requirement, when building principals made their hiring recommendations to the district turnaround office, the district personnel did not enforce the administrative requirement. Without clear guidance from the district, building principals were able to construct their own definitions and sets of expectations for the transformation coach.

Sam captured this role’s ambiguity, “I’ve been told I’m not an administrator who handles discipline. I’m not an administrator who does evaluation. And my thought is, ‘Okay, what kind of administrator am I then?’” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). Those with administrative credentials didn’t necessarily receive administrative compensation. Kelly was a first-year employee of the district and was unsure if she was going to be evaluated as an administrator or as teacher on special assignment.

I have yet to be evaluated. No one knows what tool they’re going to use. No one knows who’s going to do it. You know, if I’m new, I know principals are evaluated, and so am I evaluated as a principal, which is one time a year? Or am I still considered a teacher with a special assignment and I’m two times a year? I don’t think they have that—you know, my email, I was sent on a teacher’s email, so just recently, they gave me administrator’s rights, so I have a bigger email, because I had to go in every day deleting emails because I didn’t have enough space. (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011)
The transformation coaches struggled to define their role and, when seeking clarity, received mixed messages from both district and building leadership. Some of them communicated with each other in an effort to find clarity, but as time progressed, they seemed to accept and become comfortable with the ambiguity of their role.

Not only did the transformation coaches experience uncertainty with their classification as quasi-administrators, they expressed that the teachers had mixed perceptions of their role as well. Peyton explained,

Some of them [teachers] don’t get the ‘coach’ piece of it, because I’m in leadership all the time, and I’m talking to [principal’s name] all the time. I mean, when they see me in the hall, I’m usually talking to him. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

As part of the leadership team in their respective schools, the transformation coaches believed they were perceived by the teachers as being administrators. They were seen as having formal authority in respect to decision-making.

I think they [teachers] perceive me as someone they can come to if they have needs. And I think over the course of the year, I’ve moved more towards, rather than just a coach, more an administrator role, in their view (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)

Peyton continued his response with a story of a teacher who wanted to know what her schedule would be the following year, so she went to Peyton for the answer. Peyton admits he had never been introduced to the staff as an administrator or assistant principal,
but acknowledged that he has become a resource to them and can find the answers they need.

Alex’s experience was similar in that she was regarded as an administrator by the staff, but different in that her principal was explicit in setting this tone from the beginning of the school-year.

I would be introduced as an assistant principal. I would say that 90-99 percent of the staff would identify me as an assistant principal. They see me with that kind of authority in the building. So, you know, that’s a positive thing, and I appreciate that (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Whether the principal was explicit in his or her categorization of the transformation coaches as administrators or not, all of the transformation coaches believed the teachers saw them as a source of formal authority in their respective schools. Being seen as someone with formal authority was perceived as mostly beneficial by the transformation coaches.

Leading turnaround requires the ability to make swift changes, communicate a sense of urgency, and influence others (Public Impact, 2008). The transformation coaches believed that having formal authority was necessary for them to be able to accomplish these actions. For example, Alex acknowledged that there were some teachers who “are not going to change unless they’re leveraged” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). She found that having formal authority allowed her to make recommendations that were respected and her position added weight to those recommendations. “I think the
administrator side of me has had more of an impact here than the coaching side” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011).

When you’re not seen as an administrator, you might not be taken as seriously when making suggestions to teachers. “But it is frustrating when you make some positive suggestions and you don’t think that there’s been a sincere effort to see them through, and after the first failure, well, I’m going back to what I was doing before” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). Alex did not see having formal authority as a silver bullet, but conceded that it made a difference for many teachers’ response to her efforts to turnaround the school. Kelly extended these observations, “You know, for instance, because some of the teachers saw me in a leadership role, they treated me with more respect” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). The transformation coaches saw formal authority as providing them with the leverage and respect needed for teachers to implement difficult changes in practice.

Having formal authority and being seen as an administrator had its downside as well. The biggest source of stress realized by the presence of formal authority was being seen as an evaluator. “And you know, being recognized as an assistant principal, that also creates that evaluator tension” (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011). For almost every transformation coach, the challenge of being seen as an evaluator was a source of ongoing frustration. Being in a position of formal authority automatically connected them to the evaluative role of the administrator. Officially, transformation coaches were not permitted to evaluate teachers. “The union says that the transformation coaches cannot be, cannot do evaluations; go into the observation and perform evaluation on the
teachers” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). The actual experience of the transformation coaches was not as pure as the union would have liked.

Peyton’s experience was the most aligned to the union’s declaration. He was protected by his administrator from being associated with or conducting evaluations. “I provide feedback in a very informal way, but I don’t – never have I been in on formal evaluations” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011). He was seen as having formal authority during the first year of implementing the SIG and had formal authority as the magnet coordinator in prior years. When asked if he felt like he could do both well – be an evaluator and be approachable as a coach, Peyton responded, “No, not a formal evaluator” (Interview, July 1, 2011). He felt as if it helped his role to have not been put in that position. “I feel like it’s helped people feel more receptive to me” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011).

Sam’s and Jordan’s experiences were just a step removed from Peyton’s experience. Sam and Jordan admitted to providing necessary documentation to the evaluating administrators in their buildings which aided in the evaluation process, but they were not involved with observing and documenting teacher performance.

My administration never put me in that spot. I sent lesson plan reviews to administration, you know, when I would review that part. Or like I’m doing professional development right now, so I sent who has not finished their state professional development. I send the data. I am kind of the middle person. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)
Sam’s response was similar to Jordan’s. “I don’t want teachers feeling like I’m in there to do an evaluation. I want them to feel like I’m in there to help them” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). They both found it extremely important that teachers viewed them as allies, resources and learners. “I never approach them [teachers] as being above them, and it also helped that…I did not evaluate them” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011). Jordan took it even a step further by taking the misconception of all formal authority being evaluative and re-defining the role of the transformation coach in terms of teacher evaluation. “I’m here to show you your strengths and what you might want to work on so that you get a better evaluation” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011). Similarly, Sam found herself re-framing her role when she experienced teacher resistance to her.

And I said, am I an administrator? Yes. But I’m—but am I—I said, I am a white hat administrator. I’m good—I said, I come in and I’m not here to evaluate anything. I am here to help you get to where you want to be. (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011)

Even in situations where it was clear from the principal and from the transformation coaches that they were not conducting formal evaluations, the position of formal authority coupled with the culture of distrust in these schools and the unknown role of the transformation coach, created an ongoing challenge for these coaches.

Alex and Kelly both experienced being teacher evaluators although not on paper. They both provided significant input into the formal evaluations of teachers ranging from conducting observations that teachers knew were considered their formal evaluations to
disguising informal evaluations as formal evaluations. Alex discussed this tension in depth every time we met.

I learned early on that, as someone with that formal authority, I’m viewed as an evaluator. And it’s hard to go into a classroom and coach when I have that formal authority as an evaluator, even though technically I will never sign off on the evaluation, my input will be used on the evaluations, and the teachers know this. So when I walk into a classroom and the teacher’s at their desk, the first thing they do is get up. The first thing they do. And I key in on that. I key in. And that’s why I like to be able to sneak into a classroom and have a seat in the back and just observe what’s going on. What are the kids doing? What is the teacher doing? But it’s—there’s that power dynamic that you cannot avoid, and I think it’s very difficult to overcome as an evaluator and as a coach. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

In order to effectively support the growth of teachers, Alex needed to be able to see what they were authentically doing in their classrooms. Being an evaluator, even if her signature was not on the final document, prohibited her from being able to see the genuine abilities of teachers and what typical instruction looked like. When asked if she could remember a time when this power dynamic of being a formal authority did not come into play, Alex replied, “I can honestly say, I don’t think there’s been a single time where the power dynamic of being an evaluator did not have an influence on my interactions with the teacher” (Interview, March 8, 2011).
Especially impacted and torn was Kelly. “I’m not comfortable doing it [evaluations] in this role. I don’t want to be doing it. I’ve tried very hard to get away from doing it. But it’s still happening” (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011). As a member of the leadership team at her school, Kelly was expected to conduct evaluations. She was provided with a list of names of the teachers she was responsible for evaluating and supporting. Being new to the district, she didn’t feel as though she was able to set boundaries. “I was so new, I was so worried about making sure I was doing the right things for the right people that sometimes I didn’t do what I knew was necessary because of being so new” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). Providing support to teachers on her evaluation list interfered with Kelly’s ability to lead the work of the school improvement grant. “This is what’s really interesting is the fact of, you know, I’m supposed to transform schools, but I spent, at the very beginning, I spent more time with teachers who were not part of the EOI process and the grant than I did with the teachers that did” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). EOIs were the “end of instruction” exams used to measure student achievement. Student performance on the math and English exams were especially important measures for the school improvement grant (SIG). Many of the teachers that Kelly had to mentor as part of their evaluation process taught elective courses, not courses that were directly related to the work defined by the SIG. Kelly described herself as being in a “sticky position” (Interview, June 30, 2011). When asked to reflect on the year and identify what she would want to do less of, she immediately replied, “Totally the evaluator thing. I just didn’t like it” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011).
Although all transformation coaches felt that having formal authority was important to their role, they all experienced some degree of tension related to either the expectation to inform or conduct teacher evaluations, or the perception of the teachers that they were evaluators because of their formal authority. Some coaches experienced this tension frequently while others were able to set boundaries with the help of their building leadership. Kelly summarizes the real dilemma associated with this tension.

I think that putting a coach into the position of evaluating teachers that you’re supposed to be giving tools and strategies and help to, and support to, often leads to distrust and discourse. But on the other hand, the idea that I did have evaluator rights, it also made them understand the urgency of the situation. It also made them realize that I was in a leadership role and they couldn’t treat me like crap. And so it’s kind of a catch 22. It was helpful in certain situations, but it was hurtful in others.” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011)

**Assertion 1:** *Holding a position of formal authority yet protected from conducting teacher evaluations is necessary for transformation coaches to provide receptive support and feedback to teachers.*

- Transformation coaches were subject to scrutiny from teachers due to the perception that they conducted formal teacher evaluations.
- Formal authority was experienced as beneficial by the transformation coaches and provided them with leverage, respect, and the power to make critical decisions.
• Transformation coaches needed teachers to perceive them as allies in order to be receptive to feedback and support.

Tension 2: Ambiguity vs. Clarity of Expectations

The district personnel who wrote the district’s proposal for the school improvement grant anticipated specific needs related to grant requirements that would need to be fulfilled when the grant was awarded. Rather than putting these responsibilities on the school principal, the position of transformation coach was created. Once the grant was awarded to the district, the SIG school principals were given the job description and told they could hire someone for this position. Without further discussion or unpacking of the job description, each principal made his/her individual interpretation of the job description as they proceeded with the hiring process.

Alex described an example of the conflict she felt regarding her role and referenced the mixed messages she received.

The service center [central office], I think, has tried to have an impact on that, because they’ve kind of gone back and forth on what the position is. I’ve heard [the associate superintendent for secondary schools] say that we’re an administrator and we can sign off on things in the building with the SIG. And we’re the authority over SIG in the building. And then I hear from other places that we’re not supposed to have any kind of authority in the building. (Alex, interview, March 6, 2012)
There was either lack of clarity at central office about what the role of the transformation coach was and what it was not, or the expectations of the role were not clearly communicated to the schools, or both.

At the building level, the waters were muddied further. “The reality was that [building principal] probably didn’t have a clear picture of the position either. And I think early on that the position was still being defined and redefined by people at the service center” (Alex, interview, March 6, 2012). Everyone involved with the grant and hiring for this position had two points of reference, the grant application and the transformation coach job description (see Appendix A). “I read the grant and everything. But as far as knowing exactly what that position was? I didn't know” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011).

The language of the job description was developed based on the requirements of the school improvement grant. Many of the requirements of the transformation coach (see Appendix A) such as implement professional learning communities, articulate the transformation reform model, and disseminate information regarding best transformational practices were foreign to building leadership and respectively to the newly hired transformation coaches.

I think that one of the avenues that [the school district] totally fell short in, absolutely 100 percent, is they said here’s your job description, do your job description and do whatever the principal tells you and you’re going to be great.
Okay, I guess everybody will know this afterward, but I had no idea what a PLC was, what it meant, or what even it stood for.” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

The practices required by the grant were so new to this district, it was hard for them to be fully prepared for what to expect and how to implement correctly.

I had no understanding of what a transformation coach was. The board agenda had a definition that outlined job responsibilities that was quite honestly overwhelming. It was everything. It looked like the transformation coach was going to be responsible for so many things. And that concerned me, to a small degree, but our transformation officer at the district, had said that your responsibility is whatever your principal tells you to do. And I took him at that. And I know that what I do at my school is substantially different than what some other people do at their school as their transformation coach. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

In the absence of a clearly understood, delineated and enforced set of responsibilities, everything became an expectation. Some of the transformation coaches experienced difficulty setting boundaries because of this uncertainty which resulted in frustration.

You know, part of my job, which was very, very high maintenance to me was the fact that I got everybody else’s jobs. It wore me out. You know, I wasn’t just involved in the grant. I was involved in ACT America’s Choice. I was involved in benchmark. I was involved in testing. I was involved, I mean, if there was anything that was going on, I was involved in it. (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011)
As the year progressed, the role of the transformation coach became clearer. Many of the coaches referenced changes over time that occurred because of a greater understanding of their role.

At first I was involved in a lot of testing, and that took away from the job I was supposed to do. But once, I think, my administration understood that we weren’t really supposed to be involved in testing, then they worked very hard to get us out—back us out of that. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

Looking back on the year, Peyton also reflected on the change she felt about the last couple of months of the school-year. “I feel like through the course of the last couple months of school and this last month of professional development, my role has really clarified for a lot of people” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011).

One of the factors that influenced the multiple interpretations of the job description was the message conveyed from the district turnaround office to the school principals.

There wasn’t a clear outline of what a transformation coach is going to do within the SIG. There was a job description, but the [director of turnaround] said in the little part that’s not at the end [of the job description] is that it’s the principal’s discretion. And you know, taking this job, [the principal] said in the beginning, “assistant principal.” And these are your roles. You won’t have to do everything. Wouldn’t have to go to sports events as an administrator on site. But he really defined the majority of what I did. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)
This message empowered the principals to shape the role of the transformation coach to not only meet the needs of the SIG, but also to take on additional leadership responsibilities within the school that they felt was important or necessary. At Peyton’s school, he felt that his principal made decisions about leadership team members’ responsibilities based on their strengths, not based on their job description or title.

We get together and the principal basically says this is who I want to take this on, and I want these people to work together. Like, we just had a meeting Tuesday that outlines the big committees that will need to function to make sure that this transition into seventh to twelfth grade happens, and he outlined exactly who he wanted on each committee. And they’re just natural things that we fall into. You know, it makes sense for me to take on the course offerings and the fine arts because I had done fine arts for three years prior to this. So they’re just things that we naturally are skilled at or have experience with, and so those are the things that he aligns our responsibilities based to those, to our skills. (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)

The transformation coaches were asked at a SIG coaches’ learning community session to identify a metaphor for being a transformation coach. The stem was phrased, “When I am at my best as a coach, I am…” (SIG Coaches’ PLC annotated agenda, March 11, 2011). While interviewing Peyton, I asked him to describe what he felt shaped his role as a transformation coach. As he proceeded to highlight all the ways his principal shaped his role, he referenced his metaphor from the prior month’s SIG Coaches’ learning community session and reflected that “I think that my metaphor would change based
upon the leadership that I work with”  (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011). This comment struck me as to the significance of the principal from Peyton’s perspective. He saw that his enacted role as transformation coach was dependent and strongly tied to his principal. Fortunately, Peyton had a high degree of respect for his principal and during an interview shared some of their daily routines, which demonstrated their collaborative efforts.

I usually meet with [principal’s name] every morning, just to touch base and see if there’s anything he needs, to tell him where I’m headed, what the latest and greatest news is, and anything that we need to kind of accomplish in the next few days or weeks. (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)

Similarly, Kelly initially conferred with her principal about her work routinely, but over time, Kelly’s principal encouraged her autonomy and empowered her to make decisions and find solutions on her own.

There were several times I would go into my principal and say, ‘What do you think?’ The first month or two she really wanted to see my work, what I could do, but then as she became more comfortable with allowing me to do the things I needed to do, she would say, ‘I hired you to make that decision, make the decision, you’re okay.’ So, she’s given me free reign to do those things. When I’ve made mistakes, I’ve gone in….the first time I made a mistake, I went in and said I made a mistake and she said, ‘What are you going to do to fix that?’ So
now when I make a mistake, I fix it first and then I go in and say I made a mistake, but I fixed it this way. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Transformation coaches also experienced their role being defined by a broader group, their school’s leadership team.

Their perception [the leadership team] of what I was supposed to be doing often times translated into what I was doing. And once their perception got more in line with what I was really supposed to be doing, the better able I was to do the job, even though I think everybody’s still working on what that is, across the district. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

With the job description being implemented differently by school, principals interpreting the role of the transformation coach through the lens of site-specific needs, and building leadership teams influencing the responsibilities of the coach, it was understandable that uncertainty resulted for many transformation coaches. “So do I think I would be doing something different at a different school? Yes, because it all is going to depend on what’s needed and what the principal wants us to do” (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011).

Beyond the external influences that shaped the role of the transformation coaches were the individual knowledge, skills and experiences each transformation coach brought to the position. None of the coaches had been an education coach or worked in a school that had any type of education coach. All had been teachers and two had been principals. Entering into this position, each transformation coach had to make sense of what was being asked of him or her. Unfortunately, the coaches had to figure out what their job
description meant on their own. “I don’t want that to sound bad, but there was no training. There was no professional development for me, per se” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). The transformation coaches were not formally introduced to each other or brought together intentionally for learning purposes until an external consulting organization was hired as the lead turnaround partner for the SIG high schools four months after the start of the school-year.

I wish I would have had a better understanding of what, not necessarily a transformation coach, but just a coach in the education sense, you know? What role that really is, and really what strategies a teaching coach, or teacher coach, would use. What tools did a teacher coach need? What training or professional development? Because I know that I came in unprepared. And it wasn’t anything that I did. And, you know, in some aspects, it’s a district issue waiting so long. You know, last minute to get the grant to begin with, and rushing to write it, and not really exploring what the needs were. So I wish I had had a better idea of what tools I needed and had a chance to hone the skills and really develop those tools. I didn’t have those opportunities, really. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

There was unanimous agreement by all the transformation coaches that they could have been better in their role if they had professional learning experiences and training. They felt as though they wasted a lot of time, especially in the beginning of the year on irrelevant tasks. They also believed they made mistakes that could have been prevented through some initial training.
And so there needs to be some coach training. I mean, if they could have identified the coaches earlier and had some sort of, I don’t know if there is such a thing as, you know, just coaching training. I’m sure there is. But we need it. I don’t feel like—I know that I can do an amazing job, but I don’t feel like I’m doing my best work, because there’s just stuff I don’t know. There are too many things that I don’t know what to do, how to handle situations that I never had to deal with. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

In the absence of preparation and support, the transformation coaches created their own support systems and invested their own time to learn what was necessary to survive the first year as a transformation coach. “I researched the position myself. I read books myself, but no one said, ‘Here’s these things.’ I think that my degrees have helped. I called people I knew and said where should I go from here?” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). Kelly and Peyton knew each other prior to becoming transformation coaches at their respective schools. They initiated a collaborative relationship to problem-solve and work through the logistical demands of their role together. “There’s another transformation coach…we talk a lot, we collaborate a lot, how/what did you do here, send this to me, what form did you make?” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). Starting in a position with no systems in place was like a teacher starting in a new content area with no curriculum or instructional resources available. “As far as instruction or strategies or any of that, I don’t really feel like there’s a whole lot of support” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011).
One transformation coach summarized how his role changed over time and identified what he believed influenced his work.

So in the beginning it was just [principal’s name] definition. I don’t know that the job description had a whole lot to do with anything that I did. Mostly I just kind of shaped it—figured it out as I went along and in conjunction with a couple of the other transformation coaches whose opinions I respect and trust, we did it together. (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011)

**Assertion 2:** *Clear expectations and ongoing professional learning experiences are necessary for the preparation, support and alignment of transformation coaches.*

- Creating a job description was not enough. A strategy to enact the job description and align the expectations of the district and building leadership was necessary.
- In the absence of clear direction from the school district, the role of transformation coach was shaped by the building principal, building leadership team, and the individual coaches.
- The role of transformation coach required a high degree of comfort with ambiguity.
- Transformation coaches desired clear expectations and learning experiences to prepare them for their role.
- Transformation coaches took the initiative to teach themselves what was necessary and to create collaborative relationships with other transformation coaches.
**Tension 3: Closed vs. Open Relationships**

A consistent and important theme that appeared in every interview was relationships. Transformation coaches described the difficulties in relationship building, the importance of building relationships and establishing trust, the impact of maintaining relationship with students; as a result, the outcomes they felt were attributed to relationships. One transformation coach, Kelly, had no existing relationships in the district. Two coaches, Sam and Alex, were new to the school where they were working while Peyton and Jordan, shifted positions within their schools to become transformation coaches and had existing relationships. Each coach grappled with his/her ability or inability to build substantial, meaningful relationships with members of their school community.

Kelly was climbing a steep learning curve the first few months of the school-year without any prior exposure to the school district, building, or people. Increasing the incline on this learning curve was not only the lack of clarity of her role as transformation coach, but also her unfamiliarity with the staff.

For the first month and half to two months that I was here. I was a villain to teachers for whatever. Because they thought that I was the reason that changes were happening at their school. It wasn’t the grant, it was me. It wasn’t the state department requiring these things or the federal government or whatever entity, it was me. So therefore all the blame, all the mad, all the anger, and not all of the staff, but some of the staff it was all directed toward me. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)
When each school accepted the SIG, they agreed to fulfill many requirements of the grant. These translated into extraordinary changes for teachers such as extending every day by 45 minutes for additional instructional time; participating in a professional learning community twice a week which added another 45 minutes to the school day on Tuesdays and Thursdays; designing intervention and enrichment opportunities for students; increasing time spent in professional development during the summer; and implementing routine benchmark assessments to monitor student progress. Some teachers believed that “if you ignore the problem, sooner or later, it might just go away” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011).

Although Kelly was an easy target at her school to blame for these changes, she was not the only transformation coach who felt teacher resistance to change. Peyton, who had been working in the same school for several years and had existing relationships, shared some of his difficulties. “And so I try to visit the ones [teachers] that aren’t successful and move them forward. We may have some great discussion, but then going back and watching the class, they’re not making those changes that we’ve talked about” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011). Although he was very strategic in his approach to supporting teachers and offering guidance, situations like this caused him to consider alternative approaches and solutions. Peyton reflected about the closed nature of some teachers when it came to implementing changes in their practice. “It’s just the teachers who need the most help are the least likely to take it” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011). Alex drew a similar conclusion as Peyton, “I’ve tried to foster relationships, but it’s been difficult because some of them [teachers] aren’t open to change” (Alex,
interview, March 8, 2011). Although teacher resistance to change was experienced by the transformation coaches, they did not let it deter them from their mission and did not describe it as consuming. They continued to try to break down these closed relationships and used this resistance as a motivator to try new approaches to building relationships.

One transformation coach, Sam, experienced an adversarial relationship with her colleagues and principal that started at the beginning of the year and increased in intensity as her health problems interfered with her ability to fully meet the demands of her role. Sam described her first experience leading a learning session for teachers at her school. “When I started talking, people were getting up and leaving.” (Interview, March 9, 2011). She admitted, “I had to use my teacher voice to get their attention” and told them, “You really need to stop” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011), as teachers were talking over each other and even yelling. “So after that, it really set a nice tone of negativity. I mean, I just really felt a discerning aura around me” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011). As the year progressed, Sam continued to feel disconnected from her colleagues which permeated into her relationship with her principal as well. “The principal at this school was allowing subordinates to yell at me. When I went home Friday, I was telling her, I think I’m done. And then she told me to think on it” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). Tremendous tension and ongoing health concerns defined Sam’s experience as a transformation coach. Disparagingly she reflected, “I'm not even trusted by my colleagues” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011).

The other four transformation coaches discussed in depth the importance of taking the time to build relationships with teachers. Peyton admitted that the relationships he
established prior to this school-year were critical to the forward movement he saw in his school.

I think it would have been far more difficult for me if I had come into a building that I was unfamiliar with. I think that was one of the reasons we were able to move as far as we did this year, because of the pre-existing relationships that I had and the understanding I have of our students. (Peyton, July 1, 2011)

Jordan already knew the faculty at her school, but felt that she would have taken the time to create relationships if they had not already existed. “I think if anybody comes in new to this position, it would very important for them to spend much time developing that relationship” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011).

When I asked Kelly how she addressed the difficulties with staff she experienced at the beginning of the school-year, she shared strategies that she used to build a bridge between her and the teachers.

I was working on relationships and being positive all the time. Smiling, making sure I was speaking to each teacher by name. I tried to spend time with teachers during their planning periods. I made sure to ask, “Hey how are you doing today?” and “Is there anything I can do for you today?” All that at the beginning of the year was very important. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Taking the time to “be present with teachers” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011) and interested in their work expedited the growth of these relationships. Kelly helped teachers realize that they were her top priority through her words and her actions. Even when she
was short on time and other priorities came her way, she made the time to put the needs of teachers first.

That’s one thing that I can pride myself in - I have never pushed a teacher out of my office - if they want to come in and talk, if they want to do something, if they need to ask for help. That’s one thing a teacher just told me this week - you always make time for me. And trust me, I wanted to keep this person out of my office so bad, I could not see straight, and say, “Handle your problem yourself, because I’ve got things to do, too.” But there was no way I was going to do that. And so it took me 30 minutes of her crying. You know, I had to hug her. I had to talk to her a little bit. And in the back of my mind, I’m going, get out of my office so I can get this done. But there was no way I was going to do that. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

In the beginning of the year establishing open relationships with teachers was critical to the transformation coaches’ perception of their progress. As the year progressed, these relationships continued to be nurtured and held as a top priority.

I don’t think you can achieve anything without developing relationships. I don’t think you can achieve anything that is long-lasting. I think you can achieve short changes, but not effectual changes. Not impact. They’re going to be minor. But I think to achieve long-term change and transformation, it’s going to be dependent on relationships, because you can’t get people to buy-in, to have a sense of ownership, to share a vision, without having that relationship first. And I think
that’s one of the most important things that I have now, is developing relationships (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Alex understood the connection between relationships and change. Influencing for results, one of the four clusters of competence for turnaround principals addresses the leader’s ability to motivate others and influence their thinking and behavior to obtain results (Public Impact, 2008). Alex assimilated that turning around a school is not accomplished by one person alone - it takes a team. One of her priorities was to build that team.

You have to be vulnerable and allow yourself to appear vulnerable to develop that trust. You can know all about the data and all about effective practices, but if the teacher doesn’t believe in you, then I don’t think you can have an influence on them. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)

In regard to the importance of trust in these relationships with teachers, Peyton’s response aligned to Alex’s, “You have to be able to build trust” (Peyton, July 1, 2011). When Kelly was asked for her recommendations to a new transformation coach, she responded,

If I had to train somebody to come in and take my place, you know, the first thing I would tell them is that, you really have to get to know your staff and gain trust and create the culture first, and then find out what’s imperative to do. (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011)
Before acting or making decisions, building relationships and establish trust were indicated to be the highest priority of a transformation coach. “I keep coming back to trust, and I think trust is huge” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011).

Moving relationships from closed to open was part of the ongoing experience of these transformation coaches. Where walls were created, coaches had to persist and apply multiple approaches to break down these barriers and gain influence. Where open relationships existed and trust was established, teachers were more likely to respond to the support and suggestions of the coaches.

There’s not a cookie-cutter approach to the coaching position. You can’t do that. Just like you can’t in the classroom of students. We’re not widgets. We’re people and we have different personalities. And I think that’s one of the tools that a coach has to have is to be able to read people and identify what their strengths and weaknesses are, but present that to the teacher in a way that’s palatable. And if you can do that, that also helps build your relationship. Above all else, there has to be trust before you can get to that point. I mean, to truly be sincerely received as a coach, you have to be able to trust that person. That’s another one of those tools that a coach has to use, is building trust. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Another dimension of relationships that was seen as important to the role of the transformation coach was student relationships. The transformation coaches believed that knowing and working with the students was part of their responsibility. “In this position, I am more removed from the students than I ever have been in my life. I mean, students
are the life force of what we do. They’re the reason we’re there” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011). Peyton created a way to stay connected to the students by coaching them for an academic contest. He worked with the students before and after school to “help them find their voice and express things they usually ignored” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011) through this contest. “I feel most alive when I get to work with the kids” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011). Being involved in a meaningful way to stay connected to the kids not only benefitted the students and filled a void for the transformation coaches, it also aided in building credibility with the teachers.

I think it [coaching] also requires a measure of connection to students. Of course, it’s vital to be connected to your teachers and your administration, but to also have this feel of where the students are and know them to a degree, because otherwise your teachers aren’t going to believe what you say. And whatever you want them to do with these students, you always hear, “Well, you don’t know my students.” Well, yes I do. I do know your students, because I’ve taught them and I talk to them every day. I engage with students as much as I engage with teachers. (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011)

Alex told a story of a time when she was working with a teacher on a lesson and out of habit, she checked this teacher’s roster on the computer before arriving at his classroom. “When I looked at the roster, I came across one kid and that day was his birthday” (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011). When she was leaving the classroom after working with the teacher, she told the student “Happy birthday.” - “Actually, I said it in Spanish, because he’s Spanish-speaking” (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011). The student
was thrilled to have been recognized and the teacher later asked Alex how she knew it was his birthday. Alex reflected, “I kind of modeled connections with the students” (Interview, April 13, 2011). Not only did the teacher learn from Alex’s behavior, but the connection between the students in the class and Alex was stronger as a result.

After fourteen years as a teacher, this was the first year Kelly was out of the classroom which resulted in heartache for her.

I grieve for students. I miss kids. And so therefore when I am able to be around kids I it’s like I’m like a sponge, I soak it up because I know it’s not going to happen again for a while. And that’s the part that I really miss the most of teaching and developing relationships with students. Because developing relationships with students are much easier than it is with adults. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Kelly stepped out of her comfort zone to accept the challenge of this new role. She was still dealing with the loss of her students and the acceptance of her new, adult students. Developing relationships with students was unavoidable for her; it was a necessity.

The transformation coaches experienced positive outcomes from maintaining a focus on relationships. During a data retreat with the state department in February 2011, one teacher reflected on changes in his practice and attributed his growth to learning experiences that were facilitated by the transformation coach and even expressed that “he was enjoying teaching again” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). Kelly described this teacher as being “a huge naysayer – he wouldn’t cause the problems, but he would
contribute to the problems” (Interview, June 30, 2011) for the first half of the year. His comment surprised her. “I just remember thinking, okay, that was a huge tipping point right there. Literally, we started one teacher at a time, one relationship at a time. I just think that was our success” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011).

Several transformation coaches expressed that as a result of establishing relationships, they were seen as an important resource for the faculty at their respective schools.

I have become the go-to person for everything, I mean, any kind of problem. I was speaking with the principal the other day and I said, “I don’t know what this is. It’s like I’ve become popular all of the sudden.” So it’s really turned out well. (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012)

At Peyton’s school, his principal was very involved in district-level decision-making and was absent from the school on a regular basis. The assistant principals spent the majority of their time on discipline issues and working with parents. Peyton became the person that the teachers trusted and approached regularly.

They come to me when they’ve got concerns that they don’t feel comfortable taking to with him [principal]. But that’s—ultimately, it’s something that needs to go to him. And so they’ll come to me and say, okay, I know that you have some influence with [principal’s name], and do you think maybe you could ask him about... and so that happens pretty regularly. They feel comfortable enough
to come to me with a sensitive issue that they don’t necessarily feel that they can approach him with. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

The interaction described by Peyton does not happen accidentally. He worked diligently to establish open relationships with the teachers, proved to them that he could be trusted with sensitive issues, and ultimately earned their respect and allegiance.

**Assertion 3:** Establishing strong, open, trusting relationships with teachers and students is essential for transformation coaches to overcome resistance to change and move the turnaround initiative forward.

- Although transformation coaches faced teacher resistance, they persevered and used relationships to overcome resistance.
- Investing time in establishing open, trusting relationships was regarded as one of the most essential components of the transformation coaches’ experience.
- The transformation coaches maintained relationships with students to provide credible recommendations to teachers and to understand the life source of the school.
- Transformation coaches associated progress toward the turnaround objectives with the strength of their relationships with colleagues.

**Tension 4: Vision vs. Reality**

The transformation coaches found themselves in a place where the habit of creating a daily lesson plan for a classroom learning experience translated into creating a daily plan for their work as a transformation coach. Unfortunately, these plans were
rarely implemented. In fact, most of these plans were thrown out the window. “I go in with an idea of what I want to happen, but nine times out of 10, it doesn’t” (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011). Peyton continued with emphasis the need to roll with the punches. “I never knew, from the moment I walked in the door what the day was going to bring, ever” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011).

Even with the ambiguity of expectations, each transformation coach created a vision for their work and this vision was in stark contrast with the reality of their work. This contrast made itself known when I probed them to share a “typical day” in the life of a transformation coach. The first reaction to that question from every participant was laughter. Jordan responded, “Gosh, it’d be hard to describe but it seems like ever since I got here, I kind of hit the ground running when I get here” (Interview, June 20, 2011). Kelly captured it best when she bluntly stated, “There’s never a normal day” (Interview, March 8, 2011).

Although being proactive was difficult during this first year as a transformation coach, Kelly still tried to direct her path. “I still have plans. I still have my to-do list. I’ve figured out that my to-do list may not be someone else’s to-do list on that day and time” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). Accepting that there are things out of her control was part of what she needed to do to function, but Kelly decided she was not going to be like jello and wait for everything to happen around her dictating her priorities. Transformation coaches had to be flexible with their priorities and practice ongoing re-prioritization to adjust to the needs of their schools and the ever-changing demands of the grant. “I am definitely a proactive person; definitely a positive person. I always want to see everything
in a positive light…but this job has made me very reactive” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011).

Jordan also continued to develop her daily plan even though she knew much of what transpired in a day was out of her immediate control.

So I might have a list of the things that I consider priorities for the day. And one thing about this job was, no matter what my priorities were for the day, whether it was observing classrooms or working on a report of gathering data, there were always, every day, probably three or four more high priority things that would come in. So I would have to determine, what is the priority of my priorities? (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

Determining the “priority of the priorities” was not an easy task. The transformation coaches experienced competing commitments and demands for their time every day. Sam tried to prioritize based on what her principal thought. “What is the most important thing you want me to do? The rest of this isn’t getting done” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). Alex took a different approach and adopted a narrow focus to help her clearly define her priorities. “The SIG grant - that would be my number one priority” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). Reframing the reactive nature of the transformation coaching experience in a positive way allowed Peyton to maintain his focus and sense of satisfaction. “Even if it wasn’t exactly what I had outlined for the day, it was still valuable, good work” (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011).
Some of the transformation coaches commented on the number of meetings they had to attend which interfered with their ability to accomplish their daily goals.

I don’t get to work with them [teachers] and make suggestions or even get to listen to what their concerns are, because I’m in this meeting and doing that report and its non-stop putting out fires, that’s what it feels like some days. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

Interestingly, the transformation coaches who described frustration with meetings were the same three who had not been administrators prior to becoming a transformation coach. Peyton characterized his enthusiasm for meetings as “We just met to death” (Interview, March 10, 2011). Alex was surprised by the meetings and appointments and tried to quantitatively represent the amount of time she spent in meetings. “Probably, in a typical week, ten percent of my time was spent outside of the building, but probably another fifteen percent in the building with meetings” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). Kelly was not only frustrated by the time meetings took from her schedule, but also the “ridiculous” content. “I became frustrated because I thought my school needed me and I wasn’t there” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). Being torn between what the transformation coaches’ felt they should be doing and what was demanded of them was an ongoing tension for them. Meetings were just one of the many things that distracted them from what they felt was important.

The transformation coaches found that multi-tasking was essential to their success because they experienced intense demands and ongoing deadlines. “Well, my greatest
source of stress is the number of jobs that I get, and it’s expected to be done in a certain amount of time. It’s impossible to get done” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). Alex used the analogy of a circus clown to express her experience of “juggling different things at the same time” (SIG Coaches’ learning community notes, March 11, 2011). The demands for the transformation coaches’ time which made multi-tasking imperative to their survival were colorfully described by Kelly as she reflected on a single day.

You know, your job changes as you get to know your personnel, as you get to know what’s happening in the school, as your needs are discovered by data, and so I think your job continuously changes. But I wear many hats. I juggle 15 things every day. I mean, for instance, just today, I juggled the end of the year report. I juggled a vendor. I juggled another vendor who is mad because they don’t know how they’re going to get paid, so I had to budget, get them analysis. I had to find out how much we had left in our budget, I had to answer emails. I also had a guy who wanted to plan professional development who has called 15 times so I had to juggle that. I also had to juggle a teacher who was needing me. I had to juggle a discipline issue. So I think every day is a different job description. There’s not one set job description. And so to say what’s the essence of transformation coaching? To be able to multi-task, and to understand that your job is never the same. Every day I walk in here, I don’t do the same thing twice. I mean, ever. (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011)

There were many stories of days being too short to accomplish everything that needed to be done even when the coaches multi-tasked. Several of the transformation coaches
described their experience as exhausting and even all-consuming at times. “I usually get here at around 7, 6:30, 7. I don’t leave until 5 or 6 and then I take stuff home with me at night” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). Kelly had a difficult time setting boundaries and admitted to enjoying all aspects of the work, so she did not push back when her personal time had to be used for work. She said “I took this job thinking I was going to have more time for family and friends” (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011), but the reality of the role for Kelly was that she “worked more than anybody else in the building” (Interview, April 13, 2011). For Kelly, it was about demonstrating dedication to every person, every day. There were few days she could remember leaving “on time”.

Jordan experienced a tremendous loss of personal time when she was fulfilling the role of both curriculum technology coach and transformation coach. When she took on the additional responsibilities of transformation coach during the last few months of the school-year, the end-of-the-year data collection and grant report was due to the state department of education. “I would have to work at night to keep up. There for what seemed like a month or two, I was having to work probably until sometimes 11 o’clock at night to just make sure everything got done” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011).

The transformation coaches’ vision for their work was consistent and aligned with their first exposure to the role – the job description. Their job description listed twelve bullet points for duties and responsibilities and half of these points described activities that supported teacher growth – provide site-based training, participate in professional learning communities, facilitate collaboration, visitation/observation, and demonstration teaching (see Appendix A) - were a few descriptors that influenced the creation of the
vision of transformation coaching. Half-way through the school-year, I asked the coaches to reflect on what they wanted to do “more of” and what they wanted to do “less of.” Every transformation coach responded similarly. They wanted to observe and coach teachers more and complete less paperwork, reports and testing (SIG coaches’ learning community notes, January 11, 2011). “I would say to have spent more time with the teachers that needed the most help. And I wish I had spent less time compiling binders” (Jordan, June 20, 2011). The vision and the reality of their daily experience were not in alignment.

Peyton shared a story that created a clear picture of the disconnect he felt between what he hoped he would be doing and what translated into reality.

I anticipated spending a lot of time observing. I even created this huge, like, observation of the curriculum report, and I had like three pages for each teacher, and I’ve got less than half a page for each teacher at this point. I mean, I really anticipated being in classrooms, and then debriefing afterwards, and you know, meeting during plan period time. Kind of taking apart – dissecting the lesson and figuring out how to make it stronger and we could move that forward into future lessons. I really anticipated a lot of time with teachers. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

The empty notebook was concrete evidence of the difference in Peyton’s anticipated and actual experience. “Very little of what I do day-to-day is really coaching” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011).
Kelly realized the importance of being in classrooms and working directly with teachers. She also wanted to engage in working with teachers more. “The professional development side and the curriculum writing side [of transformation coaching] I thought I was going to get to do really intrigued me the most” (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011). She tried to establish boundaries that would allow her to spend more time with teachers in their classrooms and really be the transformation coach she envisioned.

I am trying to start, but it hasn’t worked yet, where I have 2 hours a day where people know not to bother me, not to call me, not to email me, not to do anything and just go to classrooms and observe and talk and discuss and that sort of thing. But it’s very difficult because as the year’s progressed, our school has progressed. And now people are talking about these things, they’re talking about professional development, and they’re talking about professional learning communities, and they’re using the educational jargon and they’re using all these things that we’re wanting to and they’re wanting to reflect out loud. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Alex also experienced difficulty in allocating time to work with teachers on a regular basis.

I think Thursday was when I went in and actually got to observe. But that was an exception. That wasn’t a normal day, to actually coach. So it still is pretty structured around the requirements of the SIG and addressing the accountability issues. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)
Spending time with teachers in their classrooms was experienced as an exception, not the rule. Even during Sam’s shorter tenure as a transformation coach, she experienced the same distance from working with teachers. “Honestly? I don't see teachers. I would not be surprised if [turnaround director’s name] came up to me and said, how many teachers have you seen? Okay, zero. You're fired. And I would say, you are absolutely right” (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011). Sam felt that an expectation of being a transformation coach was to coach teachers and even felt that she could be rightfully fired for not working with them.

Meeting the ever-changing demands of the grant became the daily reality for the transformation coaches. Some key words that were used to describe the reporting requirements of the SIG were “ridiculous,” “random,” “redundant,” “unpredictable,” and “frustrating.” Quarterly reports were due to the state department and the district had their fair share of reports in addition to the state. One of the largest reports was the end-of-the-year report to the state department of education. Alex captured her experience completing this final report.

A typical day last week was working on the SIG. You know, with the grant, we have this video that we had to do, and we have a PowerPoint presentation, a template, that they sent to us from the state department. So a lot of last week was working on the PowerPoint here at my desk. Spending hours and hours and hours at my desk getting the PowerPoint, getting the data, the artifacts for the PowerPoint, doing the transitions, animations. And it ended up being like 60
slides after I added in stuff, but then we had to video it. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)

The size of this reporting project was so overwhelming and consuming to the coaches that Sam felt like “the more I did this project, the more the whole entire project became my job” (Sam, interview, April 18, 2011). During times of intense reporting requirements, the role of the transformation coach became grant manager. The transformation coaches felt strongly that it was a necessity to represent their school in a positive light. “There’s also a lot at stake, you know? Because there are other people counting on me, in the leadership team, because that binder was also a reflection of them” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011).

While the transformation coaches understood the necessity of documentation, they also felt the approach to reporting was unorganized and unpredictable.

You never know what the state department is going to want. And so I have to keep every note from every meeting. I have to keep every email. I have to keep every log. I have to keep every, I mean, so I have notebooks on notebooks on notebooks, and binders on binders, so I can pull it out at any time. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Kelly worked at being proactive in collecting and organizing artifacts to document progress so she could be prepared for the unknown expectations of reporting to the state department.
The frustration with the reporting demands of the grant was fueled by the lack of feedback the schools received from the state department and the redundancy of reporting the same evidence multiple times.

It seems like there’s consistently something new that they [state department of education] want. Like we do the quarterly reports, but it hasn’t—we never get feedback. And so it feels like we’re doing reports in vain. And then a month later, they’ll ask for something completely different that wasn’t scheduled. And then they ask for this enormous presentation. So right now, it’s just frustration with the unpredictability of reporting requirements. So that’s where I am right now. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

Without feedback, the transformation coaches didn’t see the return on their investment and it was easy for them to highlight the negative aspects of documentation.

I’ve really been sequestered in my office a lot, and the principal’s office a lot, doing all this writing and evidence and things. So I feel like, at this point, we’re jumping more through hoops than able—than really doing what we’re supposed to be doing. (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011)

The vision of working with teachers on instructional practices was becoming dimmer as the intensity of reporting increased throughout the year. Jordan was pragmatic in her observation, “Sometimes if you’re not careful you get too task-oriented” (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011). This was the case for most transformation coaches. They were focused on assembling and completing paperwork and unable to attend to other aspects of
their role. “That’s the only negative is because there’s so much reporting required, you’re unable sometimes to get to the main things you’re supposed to be doing, which is improving instruction” (Jordan, June 20, 2011). This bothered Jordan considerably as she provided insight into this dilemma, “I do believe I neglect them [teachers], I really do, because they ask for help and I can’t always get there” (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012).

Peyton was able to contextualize the reporting requirements and see them as a beneficial and necessary part of the work of the transformation coach.

I don’t mind reporting. It’s necessary and important. For the last five years, I’ve done reporting for federal grants. I don’t mind because it’s kind of nice, I think, to do the reporting and see, because it puts it into a concrete form, of the progress that you’ve made. When I looked at the first report I did and then compared it to the next one and then the following one, each quarterly report progress had been made. And sometimes it’s hard to recognize that in the bits and pieces. When you compile it all together and put it into that report, you go, oh look, we were here, but now we’re here. So there’s definitely a benefit. I just wish that they would be more organized. (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011)

There were times throughout the year when the transformation coaches had to back away from doing anything except documenting and reporting progress to the state department to demonstrate progress toward the school improvement grant outcomes. Frustration occurred for the coaches when they were asked to report the same information
multiple times, when short timelines for reporting were imposed, and when they didn’t see value in the work. The lack of clarity of reporting expectations was emphasized in their interviews multiple times and during learning community sessions with the transformation coaches. Sacrificing time with teachers posed significant stress and inhibited them from attaining the vision of their role as a transformation coach.

**Assertion 4:** *A high degree of administrative and managerial skills including prioritization, documentation, and multi-tasking are required of transformation coaches to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the school turnaround initiative.*

- There was no such thing as a typical day in the life of a transformation coach.
- Transformation coaches had to be flexible with their priorities and practice re-prioritization to respond to the arising needs of the teachers, school, and the ever-changing demands of the school improvement grant.
- Working regularly in partnership with teachers on their classroom practice was a shared vision of the transformation coaches which was not realized; it was the exception, not the rule.
- Intense demands on their time and competing commitments required transformation coaches to multi-task and work long hours.
- The reality of the transformation coaches’ role consisted of an extraordinary amount of time spent documenting and reporting progress toward grant outcomes to the state department of education.
Tension 5: Turnaround vs. Instructional Leadership

The final tension identified through the experience of the transformation coaches was the tension between the types of leadership they assumed - instructional leadership and turnaround leadership. The title of the position, transformation coach, implied complexity from the onset with two large concepts in the title, transformation and coach. The tension between turnaround and instructional leadership was experienced daily for the transformation coaches. They exhibited both types of leadership, but struggled as they were overwhelmed by the responsibilities of both types of leadership.

The transformation coaches functioned as decision makers on their respective leadership teams and held tremendous influence in their schools. Peyton outlined the core leadership team as an example of how his role fit into the bigger picture of leadership at his school.

I work with the principal, but I assist the principal and the assistant principal. The core group that is the decision making group is myself, the two assistant principals, the principal and the transition interventionist, whose title is graduation coach, but she functions in a much broader role than that - just like I do as the transformation coach. So those are probably the top five decision makers in the building. (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)

The teachers see Peyton in a leadership role as well. He is approached regularly to answer questions that would normally be fielded by the principal and is expected to have the answers on hand.
If they [teachers] have questions—I’m kind of a gatekeeper, in some ways. If they have something that they want to address with [principal’s name], but they don’t feel like they can go straight to him, they bring it to me and ask. Earlier this week I was asked, “Do you know who’s going to teach ninth grade English?” I need to have that on my desk as well. That’s not what was said, but that was the implication - what can you do to find out information for me? (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)

Jordan shared her work in partnership with the principal. “I work very closely with the principal. I do a lot of the things that she does. I help her” (Interview, February 16, 2012). I asked her to share some of the things she does with the principal to get a sense of the type of decisions she’s making.

Jordan: I went with her to both the leadership meetings, in place of what would normally be the assistant principal. So I do a lot of things to assist her, and you know, to begin that big picture and what it looks like and what we’re doing.

Denise: Is it more about the instructional side of things, the teaching and learning aspects?

Jordan: Uh-huh, right. Definitely. (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012)

Although the transformation coaches led the change initiative called the SIG, they also partnered with the principal as part of the school leadership team and made decisions about instructional issues. Leading change and leading instruction is an ongoing dynamic in the role of the transformation coach.
**Turnaround leadership.**

As turnaround leaders, the transformation coaches demonstrated many turnaround leadership actions such as determining direction through data analysis, driving for results, influencing results and measuring and reporting progress on a regular basis.

Maintaining a big picture perspective was important for the transformation coaches. They felt like they needed to see how the pieces of the grant fit in with the big picture of the living organism of the school. Jordan described a metaphor for her role that unveils the importance of knowing the big picture.

I was thinking definitely an eagle, because as an eagle, you see things clearly, you can see small things, but you have to have a higher perspective. An eagle because you have to have the big picture. When I first came into the job, I didn’t really have the big picture. It took me about a month or so to get acclimated and begin to see the big picture. But like I said, you have to see all the components that go into it. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

Another dimension of their role as turnaround leaders, beyond establishing a big picture perspective involved “peeling back the layers to understand what the teachers, students, and the administration need instead of what they want” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). Setting direction for the work of school turnaround was considered of utmost importance and more specifically, having a narrow focus was critical. “I really think that it’s key to pick a few things you’re going to be really good and really get where you’re really good and consistent at it” (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012).
Gaining a big picture perspective and establishing a narrow focus required the transformation coaches to understand school-wide data. When I asked Jordan what advice she would give to a new transformation coach she replied,

Probably the best advice I could give them is to study the data of a school and figure out a plan for how those components that are needed are going to fit into the year, or you’re just running around stomping out forest fires, and you’re not really getting a product out of what you’re doing. If you’re going to be a transformation coach, you need to know as much as you can about that school, the students that are served, the community, the data on the students, just everything that you could possibly know so you can identify where your strengths are, where your weaknesses are, and then you can make a plan. If you don’t have that knowledge, it’s very hard to make a plan that’s going to work. (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012)

It was important to the transformation coaches to make good decisions and to focus on the results they were held accountable for in the school improvement grant. Studying the data and knowing how to use it to inform the direction for the turnaround process became something that the coaches did regularly. They had to gather data and use data from multiple places to make informed decisions.

I think it’s important that you figure out what the teachers need. Get info from the teachers and then measure that against what the data shows. And use that to help define your role, and communicate that with the administrator. Because if
you go into it with assumptions, and then you have no foundation to base those assumptions when you start making decisions, and then it’s going to be very difficult to be successful. And if you are successful, it’s probably due more to serendipity than anything else. (Alex, interview, March 6, 2012)

The use of data by the transformation coaches was strategic. Beyond the data used to set the big picture and inform the focus on the work of the school, they also individualized to help teachers set their own professional goals.

I believe being a coach is taking the best parts of a person, matching it up with the end means, so that they can find efficacy within themselves. That's my job. That's not just trouble-shooting. It's kind of like being a little detective. And it's pulling it out of them in a way that they don't realize that I'm pulling that information out of them. And then I match it with the information in my head. And then I can say, okay, here, you have this, and we have this. And we can do this, this or this. It's always awareness, accommodation, where they can reach economy. (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011)

A repeated phrase shared by the transformation coaches was “determining what is needed, not what is wanted.” They felt that they were responsible for being a detective, mining for the true need of the organization or the individual, filtering out the weeds so they can have a clear, focused direction for their work.
Once the direction was clear, the transformation coaches drove the work forward and maintained an outcomes-based focus. The outcomes that mattered to them were the same as what mattered in the turnaround initiative.

I thought very much to not let it get too far off. Here’s what I kept trying to keep in mind. At the end of the year, what is going to matter? And the honest truth is, what’s going to matter to the state, what’s going to matter to the grant people, to the district, is did we improve instruction and improve scores? Whether it’s right or wrong, that’s what the bottom line was and I tried to keep that in the forefront. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

In addition meeting the current outcomes of the turnaround initiative, the transformation coaches also maintained a focus on long-range sustainability. They often strategized around building the capacity of the teachers so that the changes made as part of this process would endure past the three-years of the SIG.

I don’t want it to be a situation here where, when the leadership leaves, the school crumbles, because it shouldn’t be that. It should be that we put in place some processes, not a program, but processes that the teachers buy into, and that if we’re pulled out for one reason or another – maybe we did such a great job here that they put us in another school – that this school continues to improve. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

This type of long-range planning required vision beyond the scope of the grant and utilized a wide-angle perspective of the direction of the organization.
As turnaround leaders, the transformation coaches used and monitored data to frame the big picture for sustainability, drive for results and maintain focus.

And finding out how we can get off the list [of failing schools]. That’s one of the biggest things that I have tried to take on, is how do we get off the list? You know, there’s a list of drop-outs right there [pointed to the wall] – there’s 11 kids on that list, whereas four years ago, there was 114. And it wasn’t that there were 114 that dropped out, it was 14—about one hundred kids they didn’t track that transferred to another school that did this or did that. Well, that was one of the things I took on, is graduation rate. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Although Alex focused on accountability targets, such as graduation rate, she also knew that a whole-school focus was necessary. “My interest is school-wide. I know to get us off the list, it’s not going to be just the math or English department; it’s going to be everybody working in the same direction with the same vision” (Alex, March 8, 2011). Kelly learned over the course of the year that focusing only on the accountability measures would not ensure results in the long run.

That was my main focus. I wanted to focus on basically, the EOI [end of instruction] subject matters that were really important to the grant. But I also understand now, at the end of the year, that to create sustainability, the whole building needs to be involved. So I’m glad I had that paradigm shift. (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011)
Kelly was able to see her ultimate goal as “working myself out of a job” (Interview, June 30, 2011). The transformation coaches realized that they had three years to get the work done and to turn the school around. They had to focus on results and develop the capacity for the work to be sustained beyond their tenure.

A realization for the transformation coaches was that they had to do more than tell people the vision for turnaround and communicate the goals and focus of the work, they also had to convince the faculty to buy into the vision.

It’s hard for them [teachers] to understand how the SIG works and what all the demands are and why we do things. So I worked really hard for a couple of months to try to get them to see the big picture and how all these things that we’re doing all fit together. (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012)

Not only did it take time to obtain teacher buy-in and understanding of the big picture, but the transformation coaches also had to come to grasp the ideas themselves in order to help their faculty think differently.

It’s just having the teachers and the faculty have just a total different paradigm shift. We read in the book that day about it, and I’d never thought about it this way, the idea of transformation means that what was, is not there anymore. You know, and so that requires just that shift in ideas, a shift in thinking. And it takes a lot of work to have adults do that. (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011)

Learning along the way and reflecting on that learning helped these leaders make ongoing corrections to their work and have a better understanding of the perspective of
the teachers who were struggling. Alex described the shift in thinking that she had to influence with a metaphor of clowns fitting into a car.

It’s like fitting into the little tiny car and just trying to fit yourself into the expectations of teachers, but then also trying to get out of that car to think out of the box, and get them to think out of the box. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)

In her metaphor, Alex showed them how “to get out of the car” or how to get out of the box. The transformation coaches had to model the thinking and perspective that they were asking the teachers to adopt. “They [teachers] have to believe in the relevance of what you’re sharing with them. And as a transformation coach, I think that you have to show the practicality and the potential there” (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011).

In addition to modeling ways of thinking, another approach the transformation coaches used to build buy-in was moving forward with the teachers alongside them and showing the way.

Even though you [teachers] may not see the big picture, I do. And I'm not forcing it down your throat, but I am giving you the little bread crumbs along the way so that you can come in the same direction with me. (Sam, interview, March 9, 2011)

Lastly, one of the often overlooked techniques the transformation coaches used to influence teachers and build buy-in for the vision and mission of the SIG was celebrations.
When you have these short wins, they’re still successes and we have to celebrate those successes. And I think when we celebrate those short gains, that strengthens our relationship and our forward thinking, or looking towards the future, our vision. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Being the optimistic cheerleader for the team was part of the work of the transformation coaches. Attaining quick-wins built momentum and acknowledging these wins along the way provided opportunities for the faculty to join in the forward movement.

As turnaround leaders, the transformation coaches were constantly monitoring the school’s progress toward its goals and sharing these gains with the respective accountability partners.

I work with all the state reviews, the state support team review, the data reviews and the state implementation meetings. So I gather together all that information. I make sure that we are doing something in all those areas and that we have documentation for it. I also include the teachers for those reviews. I’m also over the SIG budget. (Jordan, interview, February 16, 2012)

Including teachers in the process of sharing progress to the accountability partners also allowed opportunities for teachers to commit to the big picture of the turnaround initiative and demonstrate ownership in the work and the progress.

**Instructional leadership.**

In addition to demonstrating turnaround leadership actions, the work of the transformation coaches manifested instructional leadership behaviors. “To be a successful
or effective leader, you have to be both an instructional and transformational leader” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). They set the direction for teaching and learning, managed curricular and instructional issues, planned for and led professional learning experiences, monitored student progress, and promoted a learning culture. At times, they referred to themselves as instructional leaders.

And I was thinking about it, I really feel like the instructional leader. I know the principal’s the instructional leader, but he has so much on his plate that, when it comes to instruction, I’m most always the go-to person for the staff. (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011)

The work of the principal as the primary turnaround leader demanded time and attention to the turnaround efforts. The transformation coaches sometimes even supplanted the principal as the primary instructional leader.

The professional learning experiences planned for the faculty were constructed by the transformation coaches. “I was part of creating that professional development plan” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). Once the vision for adult learning was created, the transformation coaches had to set everything in motion, communicate expectations, manage expenditures, and even market learning opportunities.

I feel very much like that manager, keeping everybody moving in the same direction, making sure that the assistant principals understand and are telling the people the right answers, and managing the professional development, because there’s additional professional development teachers have to do, making sure
everybody has opportunities, trying to coordinate. We have a massive amount of funds in our budget for professional development that have not been accessed. If we don’t use them, we’ll lose them. So trying to connect with providers, vendors, and get those things set up between now and the end of school, and figure out how to coordinate that calendar and get them to actually come (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

Once the plan for the school was created and the business side of the work addressed, the transformation coaches were also responsible for the execution of the plan and maintaining high levels of quality in the experiences that were designed.

So working on getting it organized, meeting with the teacher, recruiting teachers to be those teachers that come in, meeting with one of the consultants who helped develop the lesson plans. I’ve spent a lot of time in the past couple weeks creating that process. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

Kelly described her role as “bringing in the professional development, making sure that the professional learning community time is spent as quality time” (Interview, March 8, 2011). She often remarked on the accountability aspects of her experience and the struggle she had becoming comfortable monitoring the learning experiences of adults. When I asked her how the teachers in her school saw her role, she responded, “She does all the professional development, scheduling, everything. She does all the scheduling for the PLCs; she’s involved in the PLCs” (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011).
Curricular and instructional issues were part of the daily experience of the transformation coach. In one of the SIG schools, each member of the leadership team including the principal, assistant principals and the transformation coach, was in charge of a specific curricular area. “Each of the administrators has their own department that they focused on” (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011). When this team assembled each week, they discussed their content area and the progress it was making. It was a collaborative approach to instructional leadership in this school. In the other three schools, the instructional leadership role was primarily filled by the transformation coach.

Peyton’s principal was being groomed to work at the district level which meant he was often attending district meetings and absent from the school. This placed additional responsibility on Peyton to be the primary instructional leader.

My main concern is that I stay involved in all the conversations, particularly those pertaining to curriculum and academics, because I’ve got to be able to answer questions. Not only do I have to be able to report on it, but I’ve got to be able to manage whatever personnel issues arise because of curriculum decisions, and I just need to know what’s happening. If this teacher’s going to move from teaching 11th grade to next year teaching 7th grade because of this reason, I need to be aware of that because people come to me and ask questions and I, even if I can’t give them the answer because of confidentiality or timing or whatever, I need to know so I can know how to shape the discussion. (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)
As part of the district-wide consolidation efforts that closed twelve school buildings at the end of the 2010-2011 school-year, Peyton’s school was gearing up to expand from a traditional high school of 9th through 12th grades to a joint junior and high school with 7th through 12th grades. Many of the curricular and instructional issues with this transition became Peyton’s work at the end of the school-year.

And then right now, with the district consolidation and the likelihood – almost certainty – that we will absorb seventh and eighth graders into our building, that has absorbed a lot of my time. So, what kind of course offerings are we going to do? How are we going to maintain the facility and keep seventh and eighth graders separate? How is that going to impact the SIG budget? So what budget revisions need to be made so that we can pull them in? How do we make PLCs work with different starting times? High school and middle school start at different times. How do we get everybody together so we can have vertical alignment throughout the building? So those are the kinds of issues that I’ve been trying to deal with. So sketching out bus schedules and PLC possibilities and things like that. (Peyton, interview, April 29, 2011)

Addressing the curricular issues related to the SIG as well as the broader issues related to the health of the learning organization were of concern to Peyton.

A challenge shared by all transformation coaches was leading adult learning experiences. None of the coaches had previously had teachers as their students, so grappling with the nuances of meeting adult learning needs was a steep learning curve.
It’s just learning how to motivate different personalities. I mean, it’s just like the classroom. So in a way, I did have some tools on that I used as a teacher with students. It’s just these are a little bit more high-caliper tools. They’re more precise. They’re German-engineered to work with the teachers. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

Jordan found that she defined her own success by measuring the level of use of teachers implementing a new process for lesson planning and the amount of time she spent providing job-embedded professional development.

Probably my biggest success was really getting them [teachers] to look at their lesson plans and put those components on and get them uploaded, and the other part was, I designed and put forth, I think—I can’t remember if it’s 129, but I think it’s 129 hours of professional development, job-embedded. (Jordan, interview, June 20, 2011)

Jordan’s situation was unique since she was a curriculum technology coach with the transformation coach responsibilities added to her role during the last months of the school-year. For most of the year she worked directly with teachers and helped them to integrate technology as a curricular tool. The transformation coaches led professional development, but not to the degree that Jordan was able to do.

There were a few instances when the transformation coaches were able to model a lesson for teachers. Alex shared a time when she worked with a math teacher to demonstrate how she used to teach math.
And when we were done [modeling and observing], she was like, “That was really awesome. That was great. I really appreciated you doing that.” And we talked about the modeling process. And we talked about why I did the certain things I did, and asking her how she thought that she could do that in her own class. And it was really productive (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)

Alex was only comfortable demonstrating math lessons. She admitted that “effective teaching practices are mostly universal” (Interview, April 13, 2011), but also felt that “it’s important to be able to model specifically for their content area”. With such little time available to work directly with teachers on their classroom practice, Alex wasn’t able to take on teachers from other content areas.

The transformation coaches found that their adult students needed validation just like their previous high school students. Kelly shared an ongoing occurrence in her experience of teachers lining up outside the door to her office wanting her time.

They want validation. They want “you’re doing a good job”. They want to be seen. They may not be doing a good job, but they want to be seen. And, you know, there’s a core group of teachers that I have been working with for a very long time that things are starting to really happen in their classrooms. We had a celebratory moment, another good day. We had a data retreat and one of my math teachers who just could have gone either way and when I started there was actually hanging around with the rebellion sector, he said in the data retreat that some of the things that he had learned in professional development, professional
learning communities, etc. he had started trying and recognized the value. I had challenged him the month before to use one different method of teaching each week, not to overwhelm, so just one time each week use a different method, use a different form, use a different way, and now he is a very dynamic teacher. And his individual professional development plan was really done well. (Kelly, interview, March 8, 2011)

Kelly continued to remind herself that “these teachers are my students now, which, it took me a little bit to have that mind frame. I wasn’t used to the idea of adult learning” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011). Her experience supervising the learning of teachers was truly a learning experience for her as well. “Adults are very different. Sometimes they have to come to their own conclusions and think that it’s their idea” (Kelly, interview, June 30, 2011).

As instructional leaders, the transformation coaches found themselves attached to their computers monitoring student progress, analyzing data for trends, and using this data to inform their decisions. Sam referred to herself as an “analyst” (Interview, March 9, 2011), and Alex admitted to doing “a lot of data disaggregation” (Interview, March 8, 2011) and pointed to a data wall in her office as evidence. Alex even conceded that the bulk of her time was spent processing data. When I asked Alex what she thought was an important skill for a transformation coach, she recommended being able to process data.

I think you have to be able to process data, you know? You have to be able to see the trends. You have to see, why are these students not doing well and these
students are doing better? And what’s the relationship? Is it the teacher? Was it that their teacher was sick for a month? You know, you have to look at all the reasons why someone, why the data is what it is. And you’ve got to be able to bring solutions to the table too. (Alex, interview, March 8, 2011)

As a former math teacher, Alex was comfortable interacting with numbers and determining significance so that recommendations could be made to teachers.

Kelly felt the pressure and the demands of being able to manage the data, but was not comfortable with this aspect of her experience. She knew she had no choice and had to learn to be comfortable with data. In response to a question about which aspects of her role pushed her out of her comfort zone the most she singled out processing data.

With this different type of data, numbers, I’m not good. I’m not good. I’m just not. And so it’s definitely taken me out of my comfort zone. And with the people surrounding me, I’ve had to really pretend I know what I’m doing. And there are times I still pretend. And then I go home and I think that’s why I’ve had to work so hard this year is because I am an English person. I want to talk about it. I want to, you know, give me the data narrative part, and I’m good. But this type of data narrative is different than what I’ve done. (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011)

The transformation coaches did not enter into their roles as experts. They each considered themselves learners which allowed them to take on these challenging aspects of their experience.
Part of their experience in instructional leadership was creating a culture of learning in their schools, especially pertaining to the adults. One tool that helped them begin to establish this culture was professional learning communities (PLCs). Within the framework of the SIG, they were required to establish job-embedded PLCs that met for a total of 90 minutes each week. Each SIG school in this district implemented PLCs twice a week for 45 minutes per session. The transformation coaches led the work of the PLCs in their respective schools.

I have tried within PLCs to influence instruction - the topics that I pick for us to do, like last week we did a book study on homework, “The Battle of Homework” by Harris Cooper. And I created my own protocol—or modified from an existing protocol to work within our time frame. We’ve talked about student choice and creating menus so students can pick what they want to do, to show they know the material. And so I’ve tried to influence in that way. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)

While some transformation coaches facilitated PLCs, others visited them on a rotating basis. “I can’t be at every PLC meeting. I do take turns and I hit two PLC meetings a day. And so, probably every three weeks, I get into every department. Every three weeks, I get into every PLC” (Kelly, interview, April 13, 2011). They were able to use the structure and framework of the PLCs to exercise instructional leadership as they selected topics, provided support, facilitated protocols, and set high expectations for teachers as learners.
Peyton shared that witnessing teachers realize that they themselves are learners was viewed as one of the biggest successes during his first year as transformation coach.

When I look over the course of the year and I see my teachers as learners - they developed into learners. They redefined themselves as professional learners. And I don’t—I really firmly don’t believe that they began the year that way. So I feel very good about helping to shape that and helping to move them forward and find that passion for learning again, and believing that it was necessary and that they weren’t experts. Nobody’s ever—you know, we’re never done learning. And so they have come to believe that. (Peyton, interview, July 1, 2011)

Peyton viewed this as a huge cultural shift in his building among the staff. He regularly commented that they have a “culture of learning” in their school that wasn’t there before.

Promoting an instructional climate or establishing a culture of learning was important to the transformation coaches because it signaled sustainability. This was where the dual responsibility of turnaround leader and instructional leader came together. If a solid learning culture could be established, the changes being asked of the teachers would more easily take hold. When I asked Peyton what the essence of being a transformation coach was to him, he responded, “I think it’s providing that focus. Focus on a learning climate for both teachers and students. That is worthy of change and in the end, leads the change” (Interview, April 29, 2011). Creating an enduring learning culture is of utmost importance to the transformation coaches.
I don’t want it [the turnaround] to be dependent on a person. That’s not an effective system. I want them [teachers] to be able to do it themselves, and then to bring new people into the fold. When we have a new faculty member, then they should be able to train each other and bring them in so that we keep moving forward seamlessly. (Peyton, interview, March 10, 2011)

Building capacity through the empowerment of the teachers was seen as a method worthy of their time and effort. Alex summed up the importance of changing the culture as a primary outcome of her work.

We talked about effective leadership, and that if we just have an effective leader without changing the culture of the school, and then you see success, and you take the leader away, and that school just crumbles. Without the change in culture, then it’s not real change. (Alex, interview, April 13, 2011)

The transformation coaches found that change in itself is not the way to turnaround a school, but instead focused on establishing a learning culture that became the driving force of turnaround was a way that the changes would endure and be sustained over time.

**Assertion 5:** *Instructional and turnaround leadership responsibilities are shared by transformation coaches and school principals.*

- Transformation coaches had to learn to be comfortable processing data from multiple sources in order to set direction and determine the priorities for the turnaround work as well as to inform teachers’ classroom practice.
• Transformation coaches maintained a focus on student outcomes as a measure of their progress toward the goals of the turnaround initiative.

• Simultaneously maintaining a big picture perspective and determining individual needs was critical in being able to make wise decisions.

• Reframing the teachers to see them as their students allowed transformation coaches to work alongside teachers to increase buy-in and provided opportunities to design and facilitate adult learning experiences, such as PLCs, that held relevance and meaning.

• Planning for sustainability was experienced as a priority for the transformation coaches, which required an enduring vision for the creation of a learning culture and the establishment of learning systems that were not dependent on specific leaders.

Findings Composite

This chapter presented five themes uncovered as tensions by this study. Data from individual interviews, document analysis, and researcher field notes revealed participants’ perceptions of their lived experience of being a transformation coach. Extensive quotations from participants were included in this chapter to accurately represent the reality of the participants and their experiences. By using the original voice of the participants, I aspire to build the readers’ confidence in the representation of the experience. Figure 5.1 presents a graphical representation of the tensions present in the findings. Below Figure 5.1 is a comprehensive list of the assertions identified from the findings of this study.
Figure 5.1. Tensions in Transformation Coaches’ Lived Experience

**Tension 1: Formal vs. Informal Authority**

Assertion 1: Holding a position of formal authority yet protected from conducting teacher evaluations is necessary for transformation coaches to provide receptive support and feedback to teachers.

**Tension 2: Ambiguity vs. Clarity of Expectations**
Assertion 2: Clear expectations and ongoing professional learning experiences are necessary for the preparation, support and alignment of transformation coaches.

**Tension 3: Closed vs. Open Relationships**

Assertion 3: Establishing strong, open, trusting relationships with teachers and students is essential for transformation coaches to overcome resistance to change and move the turnaround initiative forward.

**Tension 4: Vision vs. Reality**

Assertion 4: A high degree of administrative and managerial skills including prioritization, documentation, and multi-tasking are required of transformation coaches to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the school turnaround initiative.

**Tension 5: Turnaround vs. Instructional Leadership**

Assertion 5: Instructional and turnaround leadership responsibilities are shared by transformation coaches and school principals.

These five themes and assertions capture the essence of the lived experience of being a transformation coach during the first year of implementation of a school improvement grant. The primary source for these findings came directly from the voices of the participants in this study, the transformation coaches. In the next chapter, the implications of these findings will be discussed and recommendations will be made.
Chapter 6: Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to explore the experiences of transformation coaches at persistently low-achieving secondary schools in an urban school district in the southern United States. It was anticipated that the knowledge generated from this inquiry would provide new insight into the role of the transformation coach. Naturalistic inquiry with a phenomenological methodology was used to collect qualitative data by conducting in-depth interviews and collecting supportive documentation in the form of researcher field notes and learning community agendas. Participants in the study included five transformation coaches during the first year of the transformation intervention model for school turnaround. The data were explicated using open codes and memoing, then categorically coded leading to the identification of five themes represented as tensions. An assertion was developed based on each of these themes. The study was based on the following research question and subquestions:

- What is the lived experience of the transformation coach during the first year of implementation of the transformation intervention model?
  - How do transformation coaches experience their role?
  - What are the underlying themes revealed by the transformation coaches’ lived experience?
This research question was largely satisfied by the findings presented in chapter 5. This chapter reviews the findings of this study, discusses the interpretations and implications of these findings and provides my recommendations along with a final reflection.

**Review of Findings**

Five assertions were made based on the themes represented in the findings:

**Assertion 1:** *Holding a position of formal authority yet protected from conducting teacher evaluations is necessary for transformation coaches to provide receptive support and feedback to teachers.*

Transformation coaches experienced a tension between formal and informal authority which was felt strongly when their role in formal teacher evaluations was questioned. Although they were not officially allowed to formally evaluate teachers, some transformation coaches provided insight to other administrators which were used to inform evaluations. Although this tension existed, being regarded as leaders with formal authority was experienced as beneficial by the transformation coaches as it provided them with decision-making power and influence. The transformation coaches had to work persistently to build relationships with teachers so they could be seen as allies who were there to support and enhance the work of the teachers.

**Assertion 2:** *Clear expectations and ongoing professional learning experiences are necessary for the preparation, support and alignment of transformation coaches.*

The second tension experienced was between ambiguity and clarity of expectations. The transformation coaches desired clear expectations and learning
experiences to prepare them for their role, but they did not receive either. Instead they
had to learn to be comfortable with ambiguity and seek or create their own systems of
support and understanding. In the absence of clear direction from the school district, the
role of transformation coach was shaped by the building principal, building leadership
team, and the individual coaches themselves. They built relationships with other
transformation coaches in the district in an effort to understand how to be a
transformation coach.

**Assertion 3:** Establishing strong, open, trusting relationships with teachers and students
is essential for transformation coaches to overcome resistance to change and move the
turnaround initiative forward.

Closed versus open relationships was the third tension experienced by the
transformation coaches as they continually worked to navigate teacher resistance and
build open relationships to overcome these barriers. They found themselves investing
time in establishing trusting relationships which was regarded as one of the most essential
dimensions of their experience as transformation coaches. In addition to building open
relationships with teachers, they found that maintaining close working relationships with
students built credibility and deepened their understanding of their work. Transformation
coaches felt they experienced progress toward turnaround objectives when they had
strong relationships with colleagues.
**Assertion 4:** A high degree of administrative and managerial skills including prioritization, documentation, and multi-tasking are required of transformation coaches to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the school improvement grant.

The vision of being a transformation coach was in direct opposition to the reality experienced by them. Working regularly in partnerships with teachers was a shared vision of the transformation coaches and was experienced as an exception, not the rule. Instead, the reality of their experience consisted of an extraordinary amount of time spent reporting progress toward grant outcomes to accountability entities. The intense demands on their time and competing commitments required transformation coaches to be masters at multi-tasking and to work extended hours. They learned to be flexible with their priorities and practiced re-prioritization daily in order to respond to the arising needs of the teachers, school, and the demands of the SIG. There was no such thing as a typical day in the life of a transformation coach.

**Assertion 5:** Instructional and turnaround leadership responsibilities are shared by transformation coaches and school principals.

The final tension was between turnaround and instructional leadership which converged in this role. Transformation coaches simultaneously shared both types of leadership responsibilities with their principals. They maintained a big picture perspective while also determining and addressing individual needs. Data processing to make decisions for the turnaround movement as well as to adjust classroom practice were part of the ongoing experience of the transformation coaches. They learned to see the
teachers as their students and worked alongside the teachers to facilitate their learning. A priority for the transformation coaches was planning for sustainability through the establishment of a learning culture that would not be dependent on individuals.

These five assertions tell the story of the transformation coaches’ lived experience. In an attempt to provide a more holistic understanding, the following discussion provides interpretive insight into these findings and identifies implications. The discussion takes into consideration the scholarly research and literature on school reform, turnaround leadership and instructional leadership. The implications of these findings are intended to enhance the understanding of the experience of transformation coaches. In the following sections, the interpretations, implications and recommendations will be presented for each assertion. Preceding each discussion is a figure organizing these dimensions of thinking and application. Transformation coach is represented by TC in the figures throughout this chapter.

Assertion 1: Interpretations and Implications

Figure 6.1 presents the researcher’s analysis process for assertion 1. Following the figure is a discussion of the interpretations and implications of this assertion.
Assertion 1: *Holding a position of formal authority yet protected from conducting teacher evaluations is necessary for transformation coaches to provide receptive support and feedback to teachers.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • There is an existing lack of trust between teachers and their evaluators.  
• The authority to act and make quick decisions is imperative to the work of the TC.  
• TCs need to be able to make recommendations that are received with authority, yet partner with teachers so they will willingly apply the recommendations. | • TCs are non-evaluative administrators.  
• TCs are not instructional coaches.  
• Teacher leaders or instructional coaches are needed to augment the work of TCs. | a) TCs should hold an administrative credential and a position of formal authority.  
b) TCs should be protected from conducting teacher evaluations and this should be clearly communicated by the building principal.  
c) Principal preparation programs should contain greater depth of content in educational change, especially in the areas of turnaround leadership and building teacher buy-in.  
d) Instructional coaches should support the majority of the work to change teacher practice. |

Figure 6.1. Analysis of Assertion 1

The transformation coaches encountered an ongoing challenge to situate themselves within the leadership context of their school. They were hired as administrators, but did not conduct typical administrator activities such as disciplining students, connecting with parents and community members, and attending extra-curricular activities. They were not teacher leaders, yet much of their intended duties as outlined in their job description (see Appendix A) resembled what a teacher leader’s activities might look like. The administrative activity that district officials declared was outside their per view, yet caused them the most angst was the process of conducting teacher evaluations. Each transformation coach to varying degrees was caught in the middle of teacher evaluations. Even though they were prohibited from conducting
evaluations, school leadership sometimes engaged them in various dimensions of the process.

The culture of distrust between teachers and administrators in failing schools is pervasive. Forsythe, Adams and Hoy (2011) found through empirical research that the healthier the climate of the school, the greater the degree of faculty trust. When schools are categorized as persistently low-performing and eligible for millions of dollars of federal aid to turn around their performance, it is reasonable to assert that the climate in these organizations is unhealthy and therefore a lower degree of faculty trust likely exists. Organizational health refers to the extent to which there is integrity in the educational program, efficient administration, and a strong academic emphasis (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011, p. 8). In the turnaround context, these three dimensions of organizational health are minimal. This climate of distrust exacerbates the relationship between teacher and evaluator. Suspicion dominates this culture and administrators, rather than worrying about not breaking trust, must instead repeatedly prove their trustworthiness. The transformation coaches had to repeatedly assure teachers that they were not evaluative because they were situated in a climate of failure and low trust and because they were not completely protected from being involved in various aspects of the evaluation process.

Turnaround leaders must have the authority to act quickly (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Murphy, 2010; Public Impact, 2008; Stein, 2012). It has also been found that successful turnaround leaders often achieve results by working around rules, asking for forgiveness after they have taken action rather than seeking permission beforehand (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008; Public Impact, 2007). Transformation
coaches needed the leverage afforded to them in a role of formal authority. This authority to make decisions in regard to the turnaround effort can elevate the school’s sense of urgency to change both practice and performance. The recommendations made by the transformation coaches to the faculty needed to be regarded with a level of importance, yet not undermined by the threat of penalty. Maintaining respect and dignity and creating a collaborative culture focused on attaining a shared vision was something the transformation coaches aimed to achieve.

Although the transformation coaches were initially enthusiastic about the prospect of working intimately with teachers as instructional coaches, their experience did not resemble the work of an instructional coach. Their leadership responsibilities trumped their availability to work directly with teachers in a supervisory or coaching capacity. Several of the schools in the Oakfield Public School District used SIG funds to hire a curriculum technology coach who worked directly with teachers on instructional technology. Because of the transformation coaches’ unavailability to regularly work with teachers on content and pedagogical knowledge and skills, supplementing their work with instructional coaches would be beneficial in efforts to change teacher practice.

**Assertion 2: Interpretations and Implications**

Figure 6.2 presents the researcher’s analysis process for assertion 2. Following the figure is a discussion of the interpretations and implications of this assertion.
 Assertion 2: Clear expectations and ongoing professional learning experiences are necessary for the preparation, support and alignment of transformation coaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• TCs are not prepared for their role.</td>
<td>• Specific organizational needs are unknown requiring TCs to be continuous learners to meet the needs of their school and the educators with whom they work.</td>
<td>a) The role of the TC should be clearly defined and communicated – what is and is not the TC’s responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• District and school leaders are unclear what a TC is supposed to do.</td>
<td>• The organization’s context influences the role of the TC.</td>
<td>b) TCs should be part of a larger community of TCs for ongoing support due to the unique nature of their role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TCs need ongoing support for their work.</td>
<td>• When clear expectations do not exist, people become more reactive and less proactive.</td>
<td>c) The name transformation coach should be changed to better represent the role and prohibit confusion (i.e., SIG coordinator, assistant principal of turnaround).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TCs are resourceful and self-initiators who accept the responsibility of being knowledgeable and a resource for their school faculty.</td>
<td>• Clear expectations are necessary to set boundaries and remain focused on outcomes.</td>
<td>d) Preparation programs and systems of support for TCs should be developed where TCs participate in learning experiences before and during their tenure as a TC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear expectations are necessary to set boundaries and remain focused on outcomes.</td>
<td>• The role of the TC requires responsiveness to the needs of the organizational change initiative and the context in which they are situated.</td>
<td>e) District and school leaders should align their understanding of this role and monitor how TCs are used across schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.2. Analysis of Assertion 2

The ambiguity that surrounded the role of the transformation coach was present at many systemic levels including the district, school, and within the transformation coaches themselves. When anything new arose that could be connected, even in the slightest way to the turnaround initiative, it became the responsibility of the transformation coach. None of the transformation coaches had been part of or led a change initiative prior to this role and none of them were provided with training or support to prepare for their work. The personnel that made up the district turnaround staff consisted of two people –
one director and one data manager. The director focused his time on working with the principals and building bridges within the complex urban school system to enable school turnaround. The data manager assembled and distributed data to the schools and the state department of education. She would gather the transformation coaches monthly for a meeting about benchmark assessments, data needs, and budgeting concerns, but did not provide learning opportunities for the transformation coaches. For the majority of the year, the transformation coaches were on their own to navigate the complex system of school turnaround. Since there was no network of support, the cliché “reinventing the wheel” is appropriate here to describe the isolation they experienced. Everyone involved with the SIG was overwhelmed by the unknown resulting in individuals demonstrating an inward focus – almost a survival mentality.

Establishing clear expectations could have prohibited wasted energy and enabled the identification of necessary support systems for the transformation coaches. Doug Reeves (2009) captures the relationship between action planning and outcomes. “The size and the prettiness of the plan is inversely related to the quality of action and the impact on student learning” (p. 81). Since the transformation coaches’ role was ambiguous, it was monumental. This limited focus translated into wasted action and little impact on student learning, especially at the beginning of the school-year.

Fortunately, these transformation coaches were self-initiators who spent personal time researching topics that were unfamiliar to them so they could be a viable resource to their faculties. Transformation coaches also spent time determining priorities because they were not clear to them. Developing a filtering system would have allowed priorities
to be readily determined and boundaries clearly set, thus prohibiting redundancy and inefficiency. Spiro (2011), cautions against addressing too much in a single strategy which perpetuates the inability to say “no”. “Doing one thing often means not doing something else, because your capacity and resources are limited” (Spiro, 2011, p. 18). If the transformation coaches had a clearly defined role, they could have set boundaries that allowed them to strategically prioritize.

Although the transformation coaches wanted to engage in the highest leverage strategies, they could not effectively prioritize their work because they did not have the background knowledge necessary to determine which strategies and actions were the highest leverage. Without foundational knowledge about such items as expected performance outcomes, how to put change theory into practice, and the actions of successful turnaround leaders, transformation coaches started the year in quicksand. They relied on each other only when they were submersed. Being reactive to the needs of the organization quickly became frustrating for them and they felt like they were out of control. Providing foundational knowledge and skills is critical to set the direction and establish systems that enable success and forward progress. Continuing to build on these knowledge and skills throughout the year would have allowed transformation coaches to meet the unique surfacing organizational needs without living in the midst of chaos.

Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2010) acknowledge the importance of school turnaround leaders being able to meet particular contextual needs. “Most successful leaders use a common core of practices, but they enact those practices in ways that are sensitive to the contexts in which they find themselves” (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010, p. 18).
Assertion 3: Interpretations and Implications

Figure 6.3 presents the researcher’s analysis process for assertion 3. Following the figure is a discussion of the interpretations and implications of this assertion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Considerable time is necessary to establish strong, open, trusting relationships with both teachers and students.</td>
<td>• Open, trusting relationships are a precursor to successful school turnaround.</td>
<td>a) TCs need preparation to be able to value others’ perspectives and build substantial, meaningful relationships with members of their school community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TCs make the most progress in areas where strong, open and trusting relationships exist.</td>
<td>• School turnaround is a collaborative process and requires stakeholders to engage in a meaningful way around the work.</td>
<td>b) TCs need preparation to understand change theory and training in the skills necessary to overcome teacher resistance to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resistance to change exists and overcoming this resistance is part of the work of the TC.</td>
<td>• Developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with students aids in building relationships with teachers.</td>
<td>c) Collaboration should be modeled throughout the educational system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with students aids in building relationships with teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.3. Analysis of Assertion 3

Transformation coaches were faced with a paradigm shift where they had to see the faculty as their students. This was difficult for them because the strategies they possessed for communication, relationship-building, and teaching were based on having adolescents as their students. Having adults as students meant new approaches and oftentimes novice mistakes were made. Again, without preparation for this role,
transformation coaches used their past experience as their guide and ended up learning through trial and error.

Fullan (2010), repeats the mantra “relationships first” throughout his teachings on change leadership and admonishes change leaders to “attend to the new relationships that have to be developed” (p. 18). Insightfully, these transformation coaches realized the importance of building and extending relationships with faculty members. They may not have started the year understanding the critical nature of this role or the strategies involved in relationship building within the context of change, but they quickly learned and allocated time appropriately to meet this demand. They found that teachers were receptive to their feedback when they had strong relationships with them. “Authentic learning is based not only on the transmission of knowledge and skills but also on personal relationships, and trust is the ground on which those relationships are built” (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004, p. 474). Without relationships, the influence of the transformation coaches was limited. Collaboration is a powerful tool for a leader. Bringing teachers into the decision making process through collaboration provides them with a sense of ownership in the innovation (Weiss & Cambone, 2000). In the literature on turnaround leadership actions, gaining the support of key influencers (both inside and outside the organization) is critical (Public Impact, 2007). If the transformation coaches understood the strategies involved in relationship-building to overcome resistance to change early on, they could have been more intentional about collaborative efforts and made further progress.
Almost accidentally, turnaround coaches established relationships with students. Some led extra-curricular activities while others worked intentionally to build relationships with students in their daily hallway interactions. The pull toward students was strong for these transformation coaches, which led to a wonderful side-effect – teachers identified with them and respected them. By interacting with students, transformation coaches were building community. Sergiovanni (1994) found that “building community requires the development of a community of mind represented in shared values, conceptions, and ideas about schooling and human nature” (p. 32). The transformation coaches modeled the value they held for students in visible ways which enabled them to build relationships with teachers.

Both transformational leadership behaviors (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) and turnaround leadership actions (Public Impact, 2007) highlight the importance of building collaborative cultures. While transformational leadership behaviors emphasize the building of a collaborative culture along with the creation of the structures that foster collaboration, turnaround leadership actions emphasize helping staff to personally feel problems and for decision-makers to share data and collectively problem solve (see Figure 2.2). In both cases, acting collaboratively is cited as an important leadership behavior. The work of the transformation coach is more internally focus and less externally focuses. Collaborative relationships with parents and community members is also important in school turnaround, yet seems to be a responsibility of the principal more than the transformation coach.
Assertion 4: Interpretations and Implications

Figure 6.4 presents the researcher’s analysis process for assertion 4. Following the figure is a discussion of the interpretations and implications of this assertion.

**Assertion 4: A high degree of administrative and managerial skills including prioritization, documentation, and multi-tasking are required of transformation coaches to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the school improvement grant.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Accountability measures to demonstrate implementation of the SIG are demanding of the TC’s time.</td>
<td>• Systems and structures increase efficiency and minimize the time necessary to complete accountability tasks.</td>
<td>a) Efficient and effective systems and structures to meet accountability demands should be pre-established and supported by agencies monitoring grant implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TCs are not provided with established systems and structures to respond efficiently and effectively to grant demands so they must create them, worked long hours, and learned to multi-task.</td>
<td>• The demands of grant management and documentation take time away from the critical work and focus of school turnaround.</td>
<td>b) Accountability demands should be aligned, clear, and non-redundant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TCs have to be organized and systematic in their thinking and processes yet remain flexible and adaptable to unknown demands.</td>
<td>• Meeting the demands of documentation for the grant and moving the school turnaround initiative forward are competing commitments that cannot both be done well.</td>
<td>c) A data or grant manager should provide necessary support to handle managerial work and grant documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TCs are unable to work regularly with teachers on classroom practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td>d) Clear priorities and boundaries should be established to maintain focus on the critical work of school turnaround.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.4. Analysis of Assertion 4

If I had to single out the one complaint that dominated my interviews with the transformation coaches, it was the issue of paperwork. The job description (see Appendix A) indicated there would be data analysis, long-range planning, reports, and information dissemination required of the transformation coach, but there was no way of knowing the practically incomprehensible demands of reporting. The transformation coaches felt at
times they were “glorified secretaries” and their skills were underutilized. The lack of structure, coherence, and purpose added to the frustration and sometimes pushed them beyond their limits; oftentimes they worked tireless hours at home to keep up with the demands of reporting.

Some of the time spent meeting the demands of the grant can be attributed to lack of preparation and communication – both on the part of the state and local education agencies. Reports were duplicative and timelines overlapped. There was one incident when a report was submitted and four days later a follow-up set of questions was sent to transformation coaches to complete in a 24-hour time frame. This follow-up set of questions would have been unnecessary if the recipient of the report had read the report first - the questions were duplicative of the report. The transformation coaches felt that their time was unappreciated and their work left unvalidated. Prior to submitting high stakes reports that were used to determine continued SIG funding, scoring rubrics were not shared with district or school personnel. Transformation coaches did not know what the SEA or LEA would ask them to provide as evidence, so they collected every foreseeable artifact. Time is precious in a turnaround initiative and the literature on turnarounds is “essentially silent regarding the role of state education agencies” (Public Impact, 2007, p. 11). Managing accountability measures are a necessary part of the SEA’s role, yet the discontinuity caused tremendous stress for the LEAs and school personnel.

In this world of competing commitments, transformation coaches prioritized based on external pressures and internal fear. They sacrificed time visiting classrooms
and supporting teachers in an effort to meet reporting deadlines. They all believed that the work they should have been engaged in was related to instructional improvement yet they made an active commitment to assure the reports were completed thoroughly and on time. Kegan and Lahey (2001) identify fear as the leading driver of competing commitments. The transformation coaches were aware of being pulled in multiple directions and being unable to meet the demands of all stakeholders. They made choices and I believe some of those choices were based on the fear of failure. Tremendous pressure from external agencies dominated the lived experience of the transformation coach.

**Assertion 5: Interpretations and Implications**

Figure 6.5 presents the researcher’s analysis process for assertion 5. Following the figure is a discussion of the interpretations and implications of this assertion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● TCs partner with school principals.</td>
<td>● Balancing both macro and micro leadership perspectives is necessary for TCs.</td>
<td>a) Principal preparation programs should be strengthened in the area of instructional, turnaround leadership and shared leadership practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● A good working relationship is established between TCs and principals.</td>
<td>● Collaborative or shared leadership is necessary to lead school turnaround.</td>
<td>b) The hiring practices for leaders of school turnaround should include screening for candidates that are strong in both instructional and turnaround leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● TCs are leaders of change and leaders of instruction.</td>
<td>● Data-based decision making is an essential practice in both instructional and turnaround leadership.</td>
<td>c) TC preparation should include adult learning theory including best practices in leading professional learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● TCs are required to be knowledgeable and skilled in both instructional and turnaround leadership.</td>
<td>● Establishing a culture of learning can enable change efforts to become sustainable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● TCs use data to make informed decisions regarding instruction and the turnaround initiative.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.5. Analysis of Assertion 5
Since the position of transformation coach was developed as part of the school improvement grant (SIG) and applied only to schools adopting the transformation model of intervention for school turnaround in this district, the term “transformation” came from the name of the intervention model, not the type of leadership. As formal leaders in a school turnaround process, the transformation coaches expressed turnaround leadership actions. Turnaround leadership actions include driving for results, influencing results, problem solving, and measuring and reporting progress (Public Impact, 2008). The work of a turnaround leader is done primarily outside the classroom. All things related to this school turnaround initiative were the responsibility of the transformation coach.

On the other hand, the term “coach” in their title implied working primarily inside the classroom and with teachers. An instructional coach is an on-site professional developer who works collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to implement research-based interventions and instructional methods to help students learn more effectively (Knight, 2004). As expressed in the discussion of the prior assertion, the lived experience of the transformation coaches in this study was mostly outside the classroom. They wanted to be more involved with teachers and influencing classroom practice, but the demands of the grant and the responsibility of the work as turnaround leaders inhibited their available time to work with teachers in a coaching relationship. Instead, the term “coach” in their title represented their responsibility as instructional leaders. Instructional leadership consists of defining mission, managing curriculum and
instruction, supervising teachers, monitoring student progress, and promoting an instructional climate (Krug, 1992).

Establishing a working partnership with the school principal was essential to the work of the transformation coach. Although both had formal authority, the transformation coach intentionally collaborated with the principal to align decisions and direction with the big picture vision for the school. Principals had to accept shared leadership for the turnaround initiative which started with shared instructional leadership. School turnaround is rooted in instructional change – teacher collaboration, relevant and aligned curriculum and instruction, early warning systems for at risk students and teacher use of data to drive instructional decision-making (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). One principal held tight to instructional leadership allowing the transformation coach little access to teachers. “Principals who resist sharing leadership with qualified, interested faculty may be missing the opportunity to tap into veins of professional expertise and commitment in their schools” (Weber, 1996, p. 278). The other three principals partnered with the transformation coaches and two of them practically abdicated the instructional leadership responsibility. This empowerment of the transformation coach was well received in both cases, but does pose a potential problem for sustainability when the grant ends if the transformation coaches do not build capacity beyond themselves.

Marks and Printy (2003) studied transformational and shared instructional leadership in a national sample of restructured schools and found that when transformational and shared instructional leadership coexist in an integrated form, the quality of the school’s pedagogy and the achievement of its students are substantially
influenced. Although turnaround and transformational leadership are not identical, they do share commonalities (see Figure 2.2). The intensity and urgency uniquely associated with turnaround leadership may put tremendous emphasis on the work of turnaround leadership, thus allowing for instructional leadership to be neglected. Sharing both turnaround and instructional leadership responsibilities within the formal leadership team and also with informal leadership has the potential to build organizational capacity for change.

Effective instructional leaders are deeply committed not only to enacting school improvement and reform, but also to enhancing professional community in schools (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Transformation coaches, through the establishment of professional learning communities and extended learning opportunities for both faculty and students, noted a shift in the language and culture within their schools and which I refer to as a “culture of learning”. They identified this newly formed “culture of learning” as evidence of progress in the turnaround initiative. I also see it as critical to the sustainability of the change effort. Although establishing a culture of learning has not been identified in the turnaround literature as a priority action for turnaround leaders, it may be because turnaround leadership actions are not driven by sustainability, they are driven by the purpose of getting a school turned around and onto a road of achievement instead of failure. Murphy (2007) suggests that school leaders during a school reform initiative “actively promote the formation of a learning organization, the development of staff cohesion and support, and the growth of communities of professional practice” (p. 71). Transformation coaches managed the big picture as well as the details of the
turnaround initiative and were always looking ahead. Knowing they were in their position for a limited time, three years, they clearly saw a vision for their transition out of their role. Maintaining a focus on this end transition point allowed them to be more proactive in their thinking and planning for sustainability.

**Recommendations**

Figure 6.6 lists the recommendations presented in order by assertion in Figures 6.1 through 6.5. Each recommendation is then analyzed according to its relevance to a specific body of educational professionals including: school principals, district personnel, policy makers, and university personnel. Following Figure 6.6 is a discussion of the recommendations presented by relevant group. While these recommendations are not comprehensive, they provide a place to begin the discussion in an effort to enhance and improve the experience of the transformation coach as well as impact their effectiveness. Actions taken based on these recommendations should be determined appropriate based on the reader’s context and its similarity to this research site (see Chapter 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>School Principals</th>
<th>District Personnel</th>
<th>Policy Makers</th>
<th>University Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(a) TCs should hold an administrative credential and a position of formal authority.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(b) TCs should be protected from conducting teacher evaluations and this should be clearly communicated by the building principal.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(c) Principal preparation programs should contain greater depth of content in educational change, especially in the areas of turnaround leadership and building teacher buy-in.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(d) Instructional coaches should support the majority of the work to change teacher practice.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(a) The role of the TC should be clearly defined and communicated – what is and is not the TC’s responsibility.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(b) TCs should be part of a larger community of TCs for ongoing support due to the unique nature of their role.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(c) The name transformation coach should be changed to better represent the role and prohibit confusion (i.e., SIG coordinator, assistant principal of turnaround).</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(d) Preparation programs and systems of support for TCs should be developed where TCs participate in learning experiences before and during their tenure as a TC.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(e) District and school leaders should align their understanding of this role and monitor how TCs are used across schools.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(a) TCs need preparation to be able to value others’ perspectives and build substantial, meaningful relationships with members of their school community.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(b) TCs need preparation to understand change theory and training in the skills necessary to overcome teacher resistance to change.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(c) Collaboration should be modeled throughout the educational system.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(a) Efficient and effective systems and structures to meet accountability demands should be pre-established and supported by agencies monitoring grant implementation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(b) Accountability demands should be aligned, clear, and non-redundant.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(c) A data or grant manager should provide necessary support to handle managerial work and grant documentation.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(d) Clear priorities and boundaries should be established to maintain focus on the critical work of school turnaround.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(a) Principal preparation programs should be strengthened in the area of instructional, turnaround leadership and shared leadership practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(b) The hiring practices for leaders of school turnaround should include screening for candidates that are strong in both instructional and turnaround leadership.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(c) TC preparation should include adult learning theory including best practices in leading professional learning.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.6. Analysis of Recommendations
School principals.

The role of the school principal is interconnected with the experience of the transformation coach. Principals determined the degree of authority the transformation coaches have, how the transformation coach is presented to the faculty, the extent to which instructional leadership is shared, and what “other” responsibilities the transformation coach has beyond the job description. Transformation coaches indicated the importance of being given formal authority and being presented to the rest of the faculty as part of the school’s leadership team. It is also recommended that the principal protect transformation coaches from participating in the teacher evaluation process and communicate this to the faculty.

Establishing a bridge between administration and teachers is critical for teachers in turnaround school contexts so they can take risks and try new assessment and instructional practices. If financial resources allow, hiring a teacher leader to act as an instructional coach, would enhance the coaching responsibilities that were left unattended by the transformation coaches. Rivera, Burley and Sass (2004) found that increased levels of direct coach-teacher interaction and ongoing engagement in coaching activities were strong predictors of instructional changes in the classroom. The heart of the work of schools is what takes place in the classroom and transformation coaches were unable to focus their time and energy inside the classroom.

It is also recommended that school principals create a mental framework distinguishing what is and is not the responsibility of the transformation coach. This will enable delegation to be purposeful and transformation coaches to be more productive and
efficient. This framework should also align to the district’s framework to guide the role of the transformation coach, maintain boundaries, and utilize transformation coaches to their greatest potential. Including transformation coaches as active and viable members of the school’s leadership team, sharing instructional and turnaround leadership responsibilities, and authentically collaborating with them to set direction and innovatively problem solve are additional ways the school principal can more fully support the work of the transformation coach.

**Local education agencies.**

**District human resource personnel.**

District personnel that are engaged in hiring practices and leading district school reform initiatives are heavily involved in influencing and shaping the experience of the transformation coach. The first exposure to the concept of transformation coaching was through a job description created by human resource personnel at the district office. The requirement of an administrative credential was included in the job description (see Appendix A), yet the application of this requirement allowed for loose interpretation. This varied application of the credential translated into distinctive salary differences, job requirement misinterpretations, and the absence of an evaluation system for the transformation coaches since it was unclear if they should be evaluated as administrators. Holding a quasi-administrative role created confusion for the individual transformation coaches, their school principals, and district personnel. Establishing and adhering to a clear set of responsibilities, a salary range, and an evaluation process would potentially alleviate the stress of ambiguous performance expectations.
Human resource personnel may also consider renaming the role of transformation coach to directly align to the actual experience of the coaches and prohibit false expectations from being developed. In one of Peyton’s interviews, he captured the confusion he faced in regard to his title:

When I tell people what my title is, they never, they don’t know what that means. So the easiest way to describe what I actually do is the assistant principal of transformation, because that’s the role that I fulfill. I work with the principal, but I assist the principal, and the assistant principal. The core group that is the decision making group is myself, the two assistant principals, the principal and the transition interventionist. (Interview, April 29, 2011)

Alex suggested an alternative title as well, “I think it’d be more accurate as site director, SIG site director” (Alex, interview. March 6, 2012). Kelly experienced the same tension, but could not identify an alternative title. They knew that transformation coach was not representative of their experience.

The most substantive recommendation for human resource personnel is to develop a screening process or tool for transformation coach candidates, which addresses their instructional and turnaround leadership skills. This process or tool could also be used in the hiring or placement process for school principals moving into a turnaround context. The learner mindsets and achievement-focused dispositions of this particular group of transformation coaches helped them overcome their lack of knowledge and skill in instructional and turnaround leadership so they could still be productive in their roles.
Districts that are more proactive in their hiring processes, basing them on the contextual demands and how context relates to required type of leadership, could prohibit misplacement and wasted time and energy.

**District school turnaround personnel.**

District personnel involved directly with school reform initiatives, in this case, the school turnaround office holds tremendous influence on the role of the transformation coach. District school turnaround personnel are the liaisons between the state education agency (SEA) and the schools. These personnel should work closely with building principals to align expectations and support systems as well as protect transformation coaches from being involved with teacher evaluations. Heading in the opposite direction, district school turnaround personnel need to align district accountability requirements with the state education agency to prohibit duplicative reporting procedures. Vertical alignment of expectations and procedures and moderating the issues between the turnaround initiative and the SEA should be the priority of the district school turnaround office.

To alleviate the time and energy transformation coaches put into data management, meeting grant demands and compiling reports, district school turnaround personnel could absorb larger data management responsibilities and establish systems for grant management. This would require transformation coaches to only provide specific and necessary information. Besides alleviating the stress of paperwork, it would also provide the district office the opportunity to take ownership for the alignment of communication processes between the schools and the SEA.
The most critical recommendation for district school turnaround personnel is the creation of an induction program for transformation coaches. This program should begin prior to the start of the school-year and focus on foundational knowledge and skills including, but not limited to: change theory, overcoming resistance to change, coaching strategies, communication strategies, adult learning theory and practice, best practices in instruction and assessment, and professional learning communities. Ongoing support throughout the school-year should be provided to bring transformation coaches together from across campuses in a professional learning community so they can collaboratively problem solve, continue to build their repertoire of tools, and establish themselves as learners. This program should be created in partnership with an organization or university that deeply understands turnaround and instructional leadership. It would also be beneficial for turnaround principals to engage in all or some of this learning experience.

**Policy makers.**

State education agencies (SEAs) have traditionally been responsible for establishing policy and regulations and collecting data from school districts (Public Impact, 2007). In regard to the SIG, the SEA both created and implemented policy, and was accountable to the United States Department of Education (USDE) for monitoring and reporting on the LEA’s progress. Each SIG school was assigned a state support team (SST) representative as their liaison. These liaisons visited the schools for accountability reviews and provided an avenue of communication between the SEA and the SIG sites. The work of each SST varied as well as the number of days on campus. It is recommended that the SSTs align their work and establish clear channels of
communication that include all parties within an LEA. Contradictory messages were sometimes received from the SSTs and the SEA adding to the transformation coaches’ confusion.

Another proactive move the SEAs could make to alleviate the stress of the accountability requirements is to establish rubrics and expectations for performance, communicate these expectations prior to accountability deadlines, and provide timely feedback on these expectations. Applying best practices in assessment design to the assessment process for grant implementation requirements would be a model of exemplary practice for both the LEA and the SIG schools.

University personnel.

University personnel, especially those involved in the design of principal and leader preparation programs, should consider three recommendations. First, develop partnerships with LEAs to establish learning experiences for administrators (including transformation coaches) involved in school turnaround initiatives. In many cases, district and school leadership of school turnaround do not know what they do not know. They are unaware of the differences between transformational and turnaround leadership, the specialty type of leadership required to be successful at turning around an organization, or application of change theory in school turnaround contexts. Existing principal preparation programs provide little practical experience in the area of change leadership. I remember taking one course for administrative credentialing called “educational change” and beyond that one course, the dynamics of change were hardly referenced. School leaders in the field need support for this demanding work. An effective way to
help them learn what they need to learn is to partner with the LEAs in which they work and provide in-house support.

Second, create a university-based preparation program for school turnaround leaders where they can learn the knowledge, skills and dispositions of turnaround leadership. Administrators who have completed their credentialing process (including transformation coaches) could enroll in this program similar to the University of Virginia’s (UVA) program and the Louisiana State Department of Education’s program, both outlined in chapter 2 of this dissertation. This additional experience could be tied to the participants’ lived experience within a turnaround initiative.

Finally, revise and expand the change leadership content in the coursework required for principal and superintendent preparation. Although this study took place in an urban public education setting, school turnaround is not isolated to urban districts. According to the Education Sector report, as of April 2011, 58% of grantees are from urban districts; 18% of grantees are from rural districts; 17% from suburban districts; and 7% from towns (Jambulapati, 2011, p. 3). Persistently low-performing schools are not an isolated problem and school reform initiatives whether characterized as turnaround or something else will continue to be important work. Redesigning principal preparation programs should include greater depth of content in: educational change, change theory, school turnaround leadership, adult learning theory, leading professional learning, building stakeholder buy-in, and shared instructional leadership practices. Again this is not a comprehensive list, but a list generated from the findings of this study.
Summary of recommendations.

Figure 6.7 provides a visual organizer of the recommendations based on the findings of this study. This visual representation is intended to provide the reader with a summary of the narrative explanation previously outlined.

Figure 6.7 Summary of Recommendations
Research Opportunities

There are several areas in which future research would be of interest. To extend the research on transformation coaches, it would be beneficial to gain access to local education agency’s SIG proposals to determine if a role was created similar to that of the transformation coach. Where a similar role was created, survey research could be conducted to explore the roles, responsibilities, supporting factors and restraining factors. Much of the research on school turnarounds is qualitative case studies. To broaden the influence, expanding into quantitative methods is an important step to confirm the voices of the participants.

Identified by the gap in literature (see Chapter 2), another area in need of further research is the practice of school turnaround leadership. The framework of turnaround leadership actions identified in Figure 2.2 is based on non-education sector research and provides a place to start. In my literature review I was unable to locate any scholarly research or literature contrasting transformational and turnaround leadership or research validating or disconfirming the framework for turnaround leadership suggested by Public Impact (2007). Both turnaround leadership actions and competencies have been suggested, but few studies of turnaround leadership in education settings exist. Public Impact (2005, 2007, 2008), Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2010) and Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, and Levy (2008) are leading the way in the field of school turnaround research. Now that there are thousands of schools engaging in the work of turnaround, there are opportunities abounding for both qualitative and quantitative approaches.
Finally, I am intrigued by the integrated style of leadership demonstrated by the transformation coaches – balancing both turnaround and instructional leadership responsibilities and behaviors. Marks and Printy (2003) investigated the relationship between transformational and shared instructional leadership. Similarly, examining the relationship between turnaround and shared instructional leadership would add to the understanding of the dimensions of school leadership and inform school leader preparation programs, theory and practice.

**Researcher’s Final Reflections**

Conducting this study allowed me inside access to the thoughts, feelings, struggles and celebrations of five transformation coaches. This level of insight is rare in the consulting work in which I am typically engaged. This experience has made me reconsider my approach to external support of school turnaround. Additionally, I gained a deeper understanding of the big picture of school turnaround. This allowed me to be a meaningful resource and to understand the complexities in the system with greater ease. The openness of the transformation coaches humbled me and took me back to my early days working in school reform. I appreciate their authenticity. Assuming the role of researcher quieted my voice and forced me to use my ears in a way that I haven’t before. I listened and withheld my opinions, probing questions, and suggestions. This was a difficult process for me because it took me out of my comfort zone. I feel like I have matured and grown professionally as a result of entering into the roles of listener, observer, researcher and learner.
References


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Louisiana Department of Education. (2010). *Teach Louisiana*. Retrieved February 9, 2012, from Louisiana Department of Education:
https://www.teachlouisiana.net/pdf/LSTSBrochure.pdf

www.leadlouisiana.net/la_state_turnaround_specialist_program.asp


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Appendix A: Job Description
Job Title: Transformation Coach

Reports to: Principal and District Turnaround Leader

Department: School

Number of Days: 200 Days

Compensation: EL-3

Overtime Status: Exempt

Date Job Revised: July 19, 2010

Position Summary: The Transformation Coach will be responsible for providing direct support to their school and the school Transformational Advisory Committee. This position will ensure the complete and effective implementation of all elements of the school’s 1003g School Improvement Grant awarded by the State Department of Education in 2010. With the Principal, the Transformation Coach will work closely with the district Turnaround Office and Turnaround Partner.

Qualifications/Job Requirements

Education:
- Master’s degree
- Administrative Credential

Experience:
- Minimum of five years of successful teaching or administrative experience preferably in a large urban school district.

Specific Training/Skills:
- Extensive knowledge of transformational teaching techniques, curriculum, and staff development.
- Ability to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others.
- Ability to collect and analyze data from a variety of sources, evaluate and make recommendations.

Duties and Responsibilities:
- Provide site-based training in conducting and participating in professional learning communities
- Serve as a liaison between the principal and the Turnaround Office and Turnaround Partner
- Facilitate the collaboration between teachers, teams, and parents
- Provide direct support to schools, classrooms, and teachers through personal visitation/observation, demonstration teaching and training in transformational reform best practices.
- Support instructional initiatives required to support improved academic achievement.
- Participate in cooperative long-range planning with the Transformational Advisory Committee.
- Make the most effective use of resources and reform strategies and practices.
- Provide leadership in planning and implementing a variety of extended opportunities for student learning and recognition.
- Provide reports, as required, to the Principal, Turnaround Office, or Turnaround Partner.
• Serve as a liaison to outside agencies in order to articulate the transformational reform model in order to articulate the mission of the district, seek additional resources, and administer guidelines.

• Identify and disseminate information to teachers regarding best transformational practices in classroom instruction, assessment, technology, equity, and staff development.

• Participate fully in professional development and facilitate the transformation of research-based knowledge into useful tools for integration into the transformation reform process.
February 23, 2011

Protocol Number: 2011B0003
Protocol Title: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BEING A TRANSFORMATION COACH, Belinda Gimbert, Denise Snowden, Educational Policy and Leadership
Type of Review: Initial Review—Expedited
IRB Staff Contact: Jacob E. Stoddard
Phone: 614-292-0526
Email: stoddard.13@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Gimbert,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW the above referenced research. The Board was able to provide expedited approval under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for expedited review, as indicated below.

Date of IRB Approval: February 22, 2011
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: February 17, 2012
Expedited Review Category: 7

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University's OHRP Federalswide Assurance #00006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website — www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Shari R. Speer, PhD, Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board
Dear Dr. Gimbert,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW the above referenced research. The Board was able to provide expedited approval under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for expedited review, as indicated below.

Date of IRB Approval: February 14, 2012
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: February 14, 2013
Expedited Review Category: 7

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federally Assurance #00006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Michael Edwards, Ph.D., Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board
January 2010

Dear Dr. Ballard,

This academic year, I am working on my dissertation at The Ohio State University. I am interested in examining the lived experience of the Transformation Coach within the framework of the Transformation model of intervention at four high schools in Tulsa Public Schools – Central, East Central, Hale, and Rogers.

I would like to conduct a phenomenological qualitative study of the lived experience of the four Transformation Coaches. Their role is new to the field of education, specifically within the parameters of the Transformation model of intervention as defined by the U.S. Department of Education. This role presents new and unique challenges that I would like to study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experience of the transformation coach. Study findings have the potential to be used to inform federal policy as well as provide guidance to schools preparing to implement this model. Findings may also be shared with others for educational or research purposes to contribute to understandings about how transformation coaches experience their role and how to best prepare educators for this position. This has the potential to shape both policy and practice.

If I receive a letter of support from you on behalf of the Tulsa Public Schools, I will seek individual consent from each Transformation Coach prior to commencing the study. The Transformation Coaches will meet with me for three one-hour interviews (January, March and May 2011) and participate in a monthly professional learning community (January through May 2011) with the other transformation coaches in Tulsa's high schools. These sessions will be audio-recorded. The coaches’ interactions with the transformation team during the Instructional Rounds process will also be considered potential data as well as professional artifacts they may produce.

Participants’ individual responses will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to employers or any others who are not conducting this study. Files will be stored on a password-protected computer. Participation in this study is voluntary and they may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator, Belinda Gimbert (gimbert.1@osu.edu) or co-investigator, Denise Snowden (snowden.28@osu.edu).

I appreciate your consideration of support for this study. A letter of support can be addressed to Denise Snowden, 13585 Bevelheimer Rd., Westerville, OH 43081.

Sincerely,
January 28, 2011

The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board
Office of Responsible Research Practices
300 Research Foundation Building
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210

Review Board Members:

On behalf of the [redacted], I approve the proposed research, The Lived Experience of Being a Transformation Coach, to be conducted with the four high schools implementing the Transformation Model of school reform through the School Improvement Grant.

The individual Transformation Coaches will need to provide individual consent to participate in the study. I would like to receive a copy of the approved IRB application from the Ohio State University Institutional Review Board and upon completion of the study, a copy of the research findings.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Superintendent
Appendix D: Participant Consent Form
January 10, 2010

Dear Tiffany,

As the Transformation Coach at your school, you have embarked on a new role within the field of education, specifically one that works within the parameters of the Transformation model of intervention as defined by the U.S. Department of Education. Your role presents new and unique challenges as you navigate this first year.

I would like to invite you to consider being part of a research study on your role this year. The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experience of the transformation coach in a school implementing the Transformation model of intervention. Study findings will be used to inform federal policy as well as provide guidance to schools preparing to implement this model. Findings may also be shared with others for educational or research purposes to contribute to understandings about how transformation coaches experience their role and how to best prepare educators for this position. This has the potential to shape both policy and practice. You are being asked to participate in this research study because you have a valuable perspective and experience.

By electing to participate in this study, you agree to meet with the researcher for three one-hour interviews (January, March and May 2011) and participate in a monthly professional learning community (January through May 2011) with the other transformation coaches in Tulsa’s high schools. These sessions will be audio-recorded. Your interactions with the transformation team during the Instructional Rounds process will also be considered potential data as well as professional artifacts you may produce.

Participants’ individual responses will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to employers or any others who are not conducting this study. If information collected is shared in other professional outlets, such as conferences, presentations, etc. the participant information will be de-identified. Files will be stored on a password-protected computer. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. For questions, concerns, complaints, or if you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact the principal investigator, Belinda Gimbert (gimbert.1@osu.edu) or co-investigator, Denise Snowden (snowden.28@osu.edu). For questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, please contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. Please sign one of these letters to indicate your consent to participate and return to Denise Snowden. The other copy of the letter is for your records.

Sincerely,

Denise Snowden

By signing on the line below, you acknowledge that you have read and fully understand the consent form.

Name (print): ______________________ Signature: ________________________  Date: ______
Appendix E: Interview Protocols
Interview Protocol #1

What is coaching?

How would you describe your daily work as a transformation coach?

What does it mean to be a transformation coach?

What is it about coaching that makes it possible for it to be? What is transformation coaching in its essence? What specific examples can you share that represent what you feel is the essence of transformation coaching?

How is your actual work the same or different from your initial understanding of the role?

How did you find out about the position of becoming a transformation coach and what led you to the decision to submit your name for consideration?
Interview Protocol #2

Last month you identified a metaphor that represented coaching to you. What was it and what was your thinking behind it? How is it representative of transformation coaching?

Do you still think that metaphor is an accurate representation of your experience as a transformation coach?

How has your role as transformation coach changed or evolved since the last time we talked?

Describe a typical day in your life as a transformation coach from this past month.

How do your colleagues perceive you? How do they perceive your role as a transformation coach? How do you know? How does this shape what you do?

What are some perceived requirements of your role that push you out of your “comfort zone”? In what ways? Why?

If you were a transformation coach in a different school, would your role change? Why? How?

What do you feel is the “essence” of transformation coaching?

Is there anything else that captivates your attention about transformation coaching that you’d like to share?
Interview Protocol #3

What is it about taking on the challenge of a low-performing school that excites you? What will happen when your school has made significant progress? What will you do?

The power dynamic of being in a formal authority role in your school has been identified as an ongoing tension in the work of the transformation coach. Can you be an effective transformation coach and an evaluator at the same time? Can you do both well? Why? Why not?

Another dynamic that has been identified is the tension between being a “grant manager” and being a “transformation coach”. How are these roles similar or different? What are the benefits of being a job-embedded, full-time transformation coach vs. being a grant manager?

Another dynamic that has emerged from the interviews is the tension between being a constant learner and having limited time. How do you self-feed? How important is this?

How has your role evolved over the course of this year? Beginning, middle, end of year? What has improved, what hasn't?

What is your biggest success this year? Why? What makes it a success to you?

What have you learned about yourself this year?

What is it about coaching that makes it possible for it to be? What is transformation coaching in its essence? What specific examples can you share that represent what you feel is the essence of transformation coaching?

What do you wish you could have done “more of” this year?

What do you wish you could have done “less of” this year?

What are the essential attributes of a successful transformation coach in terms of knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes?

What advice would you give to someone who had just accepted the role of transformation coach?

Is there anything else that captivates your attention about transformation coaching that you’d like to share?

Would you be willing to engage in follow-up questions if needed? What is the best phone number to reach you?
Appendix F: Sample of Researcher Field Notes
Sample Field Notes

Researcher Reflection – March 8, 2011

[Name] and I met in her office at [School] High School for this interview. She sat behind her desk and I sat across the desk from her. We had 2 short interruptions. Prior to this interview, I had worked with [Name] several times in a group setting, but never individually. I first met [Name] in November 2010 when I visited each site that I would be working with. I met her as part of the leadership team at her school. In December, I facilitated Instructional Rounds with her site and again in January. In January, I worked with the team of coaches (one from each site) to provide coaching to them. They assembled as a group and I started to work with them as a professional learning community so they would have an experience to replicate in their schools.

This interview occurred at the end of a school day in March. Earlier during that day, I facilitated Instructional Rounds with the leadership team of the school. I used the interview protocol to guide the questions that I asked, but many questions were follow-up questions based on [Name] responses and not part of the protocol. I feel a strong similarity between [Name] and myself and had to work very hard to keep my affirmations and comments from becoming more conversational. I kept telling myself to just listen, listen, listen. Don’t interject. I’ve been a coach of leaders and teachers for so long that I can automatically coach without intending to. I’ve learned how to ask questions, redirect thinking, etc. and I need to continue to monitor the degree to which I do this while I’m in the role of researcher. I don’t want to color the participant’s responses because I’m seeking true authenticity.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Field Notes – #2 – 04.13.11

Metaphor for coaching – A circus – entertainment as a way to keep people’s interest; believe in the relevance of the message; show the practicality and the potential; coach as a clown juggling different things; make up always showing a positive face (complain up the chain, not down); fitting into a tiny car (expectations of teachers); get out of the car to think out of the box; ring master when facilitating a PLC – have to have norms, be a lion tamer with a whip

Formal authority vs. coaching role – has reflected on our conversation last month – tried to capitalize on coaching role more since last interview. Watched a teacher teach and modeled a strategy. Teacher shared her experience with another teacher who invited [Name] to come into his classroom to do the same thing. This has been very rewarding for me. I did model about relationships with this new teacher – said happy birthday to a
student. All of his students failed first semester. Many of the students are also behavior problems which he hasn’t had.

Typical day last week:

- SIG requirements – creating a video for the state department, artifacts, data, transitions, animations – accountability requirements
- PLC attendance
- District WISE coach wants us to focus on 24 goals, but actually wanted us to only focus on a couple

Can a TC be effective if they didn’t understand data/math? Everything should be based on valid research. Important to disaggregate data. Strongly supports quantitative data over qualitative data. It’s important to be able to show a teacher or model for a specific content area.

Without a change in culture, there’s not real change. Being able to develop relationships with the people you’re working with is most important – more than working with data. Need to be able to be vulnerable.

Best way to access you? When they come to me – they’re willing to work with me.

It took me awhile to see that an administrator should not be a PLC facilitator because of the dynamic of the roles. Have tried within PLCs to influence instruction.

Including teachers who “haven’t arrived” yet in professional learning experiences really can change them….stronger return on the investment.

Hasn’t really been stretched out of comfort zone….constantly researching on EBSCO…comfortable knowing that I don’t know everything. Wants to be able to back up assertions with the data. Sees himself as pretty easy-going. Will do whatever is asked of him well. PLC protocols I’m not very familiar with them, but I think I’ll get comfortable with time.

**Researcher Reflections:**

Referenced changes made since the last interview and how some of the questions during the interview helped him refocus some of his work. He spent some more time coaching teachers and provided examples of this work, but the majority of his time is still spent meeting grant requirements for accountability. He also reinforced the role as an administrator, the influence of his principal in shaping his position (context), and that toward the end of the year he’s feeling more autonomy in his role.
Appendix G: Categories of Coded Data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Categorical Code (level 2)</th>
<th>Open Code (level 1)</th>
<th>Text Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who/Why</td>
<td>Portrait</td>
<td>Who the participants are and why they chose TC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who/Why</td>
<td>Portrait</td>
<td>Life-long learning</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who/Why</td>
<td>Portrait</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
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<td>Feelings about aspects of role</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>What</td>
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<td>Disconnect between what TC should be &amp; what the role was</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
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<td>Unexpected parts of the role as TC</td>
<td>text effect - green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
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<td>Collaborate with other coaches</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
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<td>Ambiguity, lack of clarity and expectations of role</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
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<td>Support and training for being a TC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
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<td>Principal's/Leadership team's influence on TC's experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>How</td>
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<tr>
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<td>underline - orange, bold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Resisted, villainized</td>
<td>underline - dotted</td>
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<tr>
<td>What</td>
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<td>Relationships with colleagues</td>
<td>highlight - dark green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships with students</td>
<td>underline - green, bold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Example of Coded Data
Excerpt from interview with Peyton – 04.29.2011

D: So every time I talk to you, I’m going to ask you a couple of the same questions, so if they sound redundant, I apologize, but hopefully, they might prompt some just different thinking as time evolves or changes. So the first repetitive question is, describe a typical day in your life as a transformation coach, from this past month.

J: Okay. *A typical day, you know, is to come in before school and lead a PLC, or if it’s not an all group PLC, then I’ll attend one and—but as simply an observer. I sometimes ask some questions to try to point them in the right direction, but then I want to see how they’re functioning and see what work we need to do. After that, go to my office, get settled in, check email, facility requests that have come in. I usually meet with Dr. Wallace every morning, just to touch base and see if there’s anything he needs to tell him where I’m headed to what the latest and greatest news is, and anything that we need to kind of accomplish in the next few days or weeks. Then in the past month, there was a lot of, this is where I am on the report, this is the kind of documentation that we need, here’s—and then the curriculum technology coach would say, okay, here’s where we are on the video, this is what we’ve got, and we’d review it. And then, I hope to get entrance in classrooms, but that doesn’t always happen. There’s always a meeting or something.* And then right now, with the project schoolhouse process, and consolidation and the likelihood – almost certainty – that we will absorb seventh and eighth graders into our building, that has absorbed a lot of my time. So, how—what kind of course offerings are we going to do? What—how are we going to maintain the facility and keep seventh and eighth graders separate? How is that going to impact the SIG budget? So what budget revisions need to be made so that we can pull them in? How do we make PLCs work with different starting times? High school and middle school start at different times. Middle school starts earlier. How do we get everybody together so we can have vertical alignment throughout the building? So those are the kinds of issues that I’ve been trying to deal with. So sketching out, you know, bus schedules and PLC possibilities and things like that.

D: It sounds like there have definitely been some changes in the past month, just because of the project schoolhouse decisions coming down. It’s interesting to hear how you’re more than just—and maybe I’m not saying this right, but correct me if I’m wrong—you’re more than just a coach. You’re more than just a SIG transformation coach. It sounds like you’re a leader in your building, and whenever large decisions are being made that impact instruction, assessment or curriculum, that you’re involved. Is that correct?

J: Yeah. I would—if I was going to—*what I tell people what my title is, they never, they don’t know what that means. So the easiest way to describe what I actually do is the assistant principal of transformation, because that’s the role that I fulfill. I work with the principal, but I assist the principal, the assistant principal, and the core group that is the decision making group is myself, the two assistant principals, the principal and the transition interventionist, whose*
title is graduation coach, but she functions in a much broader role than that. Just like I do as the transformation coach. So those are probably the top 5 decision makers in the building.

D: Oh great. And the other assistant principals – I know you’re not officially an assistant principal but – do they have specific roles in terms of discipline or curriculum or distinctions too?

J: Yes, they do. One of them is basically students and facilities and athletics, the other is curriculum, which includes counseling staff, AC, accreditation, all of those kind of things.

D: So as these, like, unexpected needs occur, like project schoolhouse – didn’t really know in the beginning of the year that this was coming down and how it would impact your school and all of the things that you listed in terms of scheduling and alignment and PLCs and timing, not knowing that those were going to be things you had to deal with, when you have something unexpected like that come up and the five-person leadership team come together, how do you decide as a team whose responsibility it is to act within their capacities on these issues that maybe aren’t specific to one position or another.

J: We get together and the principal basically says, this is who I want to take this on, and I want these people to work together. Like, we just had a meeting Tuesday that outlines the big committees that will need to function to make sure that this transition into seventh to 12th center happened, and he outlined exactly who he wanted on each committee. And they’re just natural things that we fall into. You know, it makes sense for me to take on the course offerings and the fine arts. How are we going to make that happen? Because I had done fine arts for three years prior to this. So they’re just things that we naturally are skilled at or have experience with, and so those are the things that she kind of, he aligns our responsibilities based to those, to our skills.

D: So even though your title or your actual job description might not reflect it, he kind of goes with your strengths or your interests as well. Is that true?

J: Yeah.

D: I want you to think about any aspect of your position this past year that has really pushed you out of your comfort zone, in which you’ve had to spend a lot of time learning or investigating something new that wasn’t something that came very easy to you. Can you think of anything that you really had to work at?

J: I think I need—I haven’t had to work at it yet, because we haven’t gotten to that point, but differentiated instruction is something that I don’t have a lot of skill at, or just not a lot of experience. So that’s something that we’re trying to spread throughout the building, and I’m going to have to education myself before we get to the point—we’ll have a summer institute, and I’ll be there for that. But I need to be able to support teachers through their courses next year as they develop differentiated instruction, so I need to research and education myself.
Appendix I: Sample of Learning Community Agenda
SIG Coaches’ PLC
March 11, 2011 @ Hale HS
3:00-4:30PM

Participants:
Lindsey Starr, Steve Butcher, Jamie Lomax, Chenani Arterberry, Chiyaki Thurston, Libby Tillotson, Tiffany Ballard, JoAnn Groh (BFK), Denise Snowden (BFK), Bettye Rector

15 minutes Connections (open) and Norm Review

15 minutes Triad Reflections on Accomplishments
- Two things I’ve accomplished this year and one thing I have left to accomplish
- What I did to achieve these accomplishments
- What I will do to achieve the one thing I have left to accomplish

30 minutes Metaphor Activity
- When I am at my best as a coach, I am...
  o A flower (LS)
  o My favorite song (TB)
  o An owl (JL)
  o Life raft with teaching tools (CA)
  o Circus (SB)
  o Peace (CT)
  o Clay (LT)

30 minutes Facilitation Scenarios Activity

5 minutes Written Reflections